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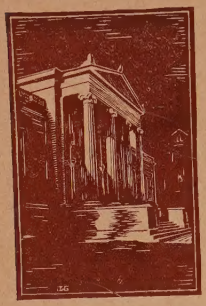

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THE SON OF APOLLO

THE SON OF APOLLO

THEMES OF PLATO

BY
FREDERICK J. E. WOODBRIDGE

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Ὄψις γὰρ ἡμῖν ὀξυτάτη τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος
ἔρχεται αἰσθήσεων, ᾗ φρόνησις οὐχ ὁρᾶται—
δεινοὺς γὰρ ἂν παρεῖχεν ἔρωτας, εἴ τι τοιοῦτον
ἑαυτῆς ἐναργὲς εἴδωλον παρείχετο εἰς ὄψιν ἰόν —
καὶ τἆλλα ὅσα ἐραστά. *Phædrus*, 250, d.

NOTE

THE illustrations in this book are, for the most part, adaptations of authentic Greek material of the time near to Plato. The drawings are by my son, Frederick J. Woodbridge, who has made in them only such changes as seemed warranted by the context in which they now appear. In the banquet scene, for example, it was obviously appropriate to transform a lady into a gentleman; and the stele at the end, carrying those two epitomes of wisdom, 'Know Thyself' and 'Nothing in Excess,' is the kind of stele my son looked for and found in his imagination. It is my hope that the illustrations, in their faithfulness to the spirit of such artists of ancient Greece as Duris, Smikros, and Euphronios, contribute, from a source too much neglected by philosophers, something of the character of Platonic scenes as a contemporary might render them.

I am indebted to Horace Liveright, Inc., publishers of Bertrand Russell's *Education and the Good Life*, for permission to quote entire the 'Introduction' to that book.

I am very conscious that my rendering of Plato is an interpretation. It represents, however, the Plato who, after repeated reading and after a studious attempt to

deal with the documents in the case, has caught my imagination — the son of Apollo and not the founder of the Academy, the artist and not the metaphysician. I have a very strong suspicion that the Plato of the philosophers is more a product of a biased tradition than of Athenian culture, but I cannot prove it nor would I attempt the proof. Yet I may say that there appears to me to be considerable evidence that the writers of commentaries and epitomes transformed Aristotelian references to Plato, which were illustrative, into a definition of the Platonic enterprise, thus linking Plato and Aristotle together as men with the same basic purpose but rivals in the execution of it. The Platonic writings, however, do not, even as a whole, reflect the same audience, the same intellectual temper and curiosity, or the same ancestry as do the writings of Aristotle. The contrast between the two men is like the contrast between the man of letters and the man of science. This, to me, is so evident that I have taken the man of letters to be something quite different from a man of science in disguise. In quoting from Plato and other Greeks I have made my own translations. I hope I have done him and them no injustice. Much of the paraphrase is equivalent to translation, for I have sought words which reflect associated ideas to be found in the original and tried to avoid those with irrelevant associations. I am not

unconscious of the peril involved in this procedure. My preference for my own bias is like that of another's for his. That I venture to claim, for in the matter of Platonic scholarship there can be much dispute, but there is little of that objective certainty which forces one to bow. Plato is one of those fortunate writers who need the aid of neither history nor scholarship to be read. My Plato may not be yours, but yours, then, will certainly not be mine. I am content to leave it that way.

F. J. E. W.

Columbia University,
August, 1929.

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THE SON OF APOLLO

I

THE LIFE OF PLATO

THERE is a quality to the writings of Plato and something elusive about his biography which may readily lead one to believe that the incredible things said of him are truer to his genius than the credible. If, from the stories of his life, we throw away what seems to be fiction or elaboration, there is little left to stir the imagination unless we remember what we have done and embellish the poor remainder anew with a borrowed glory. The demand of history that we be accurate contends with the demand of admiration that we be just. Caught between the two, biographers of

Plato have written, not the life of a man, but tributes to a genius.

He is said to have been born in Athens on the seventh of Thargelion in the first year of the eighty-eighth Olympiad, or, in terms of our calendar, on May 21, 427 B.C. This is credible. The place, the year, the month, and the day may not be exact and scholars have disputed their exactness, but they are exact enough to render possible variations from fact of no determining significance for his biography. He is said also to have been born on Apollo's birthday. This, too, may be credible, for that day, recurring many times, has seen many a child leave its mother's body to begin an independent life. But since we are told that the son, born of that mother, was conceived, not of a man, but of a god and that god Apollo, the birthday raises a different question from that of historical accuracy. The many other children, born on the same day and yet unhonored and unsung, make us suspect that there was a reason for borrowing grace from the calendar. We face a uniformity of heavenly auspices and the singularity of a great career. A day in May is not Apollo's only, for the brevity of the year and the exigencies of our manner of coming into the world forbid the exclusive appropriation of even a moment of time, so that if Apollo is remembered when Plato's birth is remembered, we may justly conclude that it was the

quality of the man and not the efficacy of the god that was responsible for the association.

He is said to have died in 347 B.C. Scholars have disputed this date less than that of Plato's birth. But a story, as if to particularize his death from among the many deaths coincident with it, tells us that he died at a marriage feast. We are told also that he lived to be eighty years old, a figure which we can calculate by subtraction, but which tradition seems to have preserved without performing that arithmetical operation. Now, dying full of years at a wedding is something different from dying in 347 B.C. even if an impersonal calendar correctly marks the date. And such a death is appropriate for a son of Apollo. A god's son, born on the day set apart to celebrate that god, rounding out fourscore years to the full and then dying as two mortals wed to perpetuate the miracle of undying life — here is the outline of a biography which may smile at the laborious niceties of historical research. It may be a creditable instead of a credible biography, but an historian who is searching for accuracy must recognize in this matter of Plato's life that he is confronted with the problem of separating legend from fact. The problem may be more significant for him than the resolution of it. He must recognize that Plato dead soon lived in memories which could as readily believe what they liked as record what was true. His contem-

poraries, with the exception of Aristotle, who used him for his own purposes and for our confusion, are so provokingly silent about him that we can only conjecture the stir he may have made in his own day by projecting backward what is said of him later. His life for us is a criticized synthesis of scattered references to him, lit up possibly by his writings, which, in their turn, present a critical problem of the first importance. No one seems to have believed that he wrote all that has been ascribed to him and the generally accepted canon of his works is not free from serious doubts. In dealing with him, we are dealing with a tradition stretching over ten centuries at least and we are trusting documents which, with negligible exceptions, were not written, as we have them to read, earlier than the ninth century of our own era. One cannot magnify too much the difficulties these facts present nor admire too much the scholarship which has been spent upon them. But one may also conclude that such facts as these suggest that believing only what is credible about Plato may be as great a distortion of his biography as believing what is incredible. For the latter is not usually said of a man without reasons, and when it is said, it is naturally linked with names and times and places which may give it the aspect of history. Every wonder has its matter-of-fact setting, but purging the setting of the marvel does not necessarily leave the setting a genuine matter of fact.

The sense of the marvelous or — if it is not marvelous to live to eighty and die at a wedding — the sense of the piquant, at least, is not confined to Plato's birth, age, and death. Little is told us about him which is not marked by something which lends it characteristic quality. His family was distinguished not only by social position, but also by ancestry. His race was of divine origin, running back on both sides to Poseidon, and counted among its descendants kings and law-givers before him, a race from which a second, no less than a first, Solon might well appear in Athens' need. His parents named him Aristocles. It was probably not an uncommon name, but since its meaning implies that 'the best will be told of him,' his parents may be credited with a prophecy fulfilled, even if his friends familiarly called him Plato and history has followed their custom. Even here the magic touch is not wholly lacking, for it was his trainer in gymnastics who, admiring his figure, dubbed him Plato, 'the broad,' and his biographers later could speculate whether the reference was to shoulders or brow or wonder if the nickname stuck through its metaphorical quality. There is little in these stories that is improbable. It is not, however, their improbability which lends them their interest and charm. These qualities have a different origin, in the delight, namely, that admirers of Plato have in the appositeness of such

stories to the qualities he displays as an author. The stories may be true of him, as similar stories may be true of many another, but their truth is also appropriate.

His childhood is obscure. There is, however, a pretty story, that his parents, leaving him cradled on Hymettus as they went with an offering to Pan, the nymphs, and Apollo, returned to find that the bees of that sweet mountain had filled his mouth with honey. A similar story is told of Pindar, but both children must have been remarkable. And so remarkable must have been Plato's childhood that we, in our ignorance, who write his life in these late times, are tempted to say, 'favored also by wealth no less than birth, he must have found in his education and surroundings abundant intellectual food.'[1] A mother's care he must have known, but whether she, 'after the apparently early death of the father, influenced his education as mothers of distinguished men so often do, is a matter about which we can only conjecture.'[2] Again: 'That he early learned to ride goes without saying; his brothers were troopers, we must believe the same of him, and he had at his command the most accurate knowledge of the bodily build of a noble steed.[3]

[1] Zeller, E.: *Plato and the Older Academy* (1876), 3.

[2] Steinhart, K.: *Platon's Leben* (1873), 65.

[3] The reference is to *Phædrus*, 253 d. 'Erect and well-jointed, carrying the neck high, aquiline nose, white color, black-eyed, a lover of honor

He never denied being the friend of dogs. All this was a matter of course in a house like that of his parents. And he received besides the education befitting his rank. We may confidently assume generalities without being informed about particulars, and are, moreover, justified in believing that his education at home was not lacking in careful oversight and strict discipline.'[1]

There is no good reason to doubt the truth of such statements even if they rest almost exclusively on our own authority. Yet, if we do not take ourselves too seriously, we may confess that, in saying things like these, we are engaged, not in writing history, but in manufacturing biography. Others may have done the same before us. It is easy to suspect it of Apuleius, for example. He wrote six centuries after Plato's day and tells us that Speusippus, 'learned in the family records,' praised the boy's quickness of perception, his admirable native modesty, and his early love of study. Speusippus, as nephew of Plato and an executor of his will, may have had stories to tell of his famous uncle. But we must wish that Apuleius, if he were quoting, had quoted at greater length and told us something less readily inferred from the 'increment of these and other virtues in the man.' There may have been much or little peculiarly distinctive in Plato's childhood, but it

with temperance and modesty, fellow of true glory, needing no whip, he is guided solely by the word of command and reason.'

[1] Wilamowitz-Moellondorf, *Platon* (1920), 1, 42.

is an agreeable occupation to imagine what that childhood might have been in so noble a household with the Age of Pericles still a vivid and living memory. Plato must have been a child in his time. We know nothing of the child. We know something of the time. Then why not put the child in a setting appropriate to what that child became? This need not be forbidden. To do it, however, is to do what has been repeatedly done before, to assume generalities without being informed about particulars.

The youth of Plato finds fragmentary attention in our sources of information. He is schooled by very eminent teachers in grammar, music, and gymnastics. He is competitor and sometimes champion in the popular sports. He has the customary experience in the army. Such things are expected of him and are safe to say. That he never laughed and was yet a merry boy presents an embarrassing alternative. Yet a puzzling mixture of downright seriousness and mischievous mirth, of the sublime and the ridiculous, of tragedy and comedy, confronts us through many centuries. So, when we are told that he aspired to be a tragic poet, wrote verse in all the accepted forms, read Epicharmos and slept with Sophron under his pillow, our credulity need not be strained. The writers just named had apparently done something not unlike what Plato himself later did. They seem to have written

dramatic sketches of persons and conversations, with a comic flavor which at times could alter its quality. They look like men who painted the human scene with some realism and perhaps with a moral purpose. It may be said that Plato could have learned something from them and that, if he did, the later suspicion that he took more than he ought from Epicharmos, may have a basis in fact or in disparagement. At any rate, he eclipsed Epicharmos and Sophron in their reputed genre. That may be a reason why they are mentioned and remembered.

At the age of twenty, there appears to have come a crisis in the youthful poet's life. He met Socrates. Scholars have doubted whether this was the first meeting of the two whose names have been ever since associated. Tradition, however, in the main, has liked to have it so, and may illustrate Aristotle's dictum that poetry is truer than history. Socrates was forewarned of the meeting. A swan had appeared to him in a dream, rested on his knees, and then flew away with a beautiful song. The next day Plato was introduced to him and recognized as the portent of the dream. The story gets embellished and connected with the birthdays of the two. The swan is a fledgling, flying from the altar consecrated to Love in the Academy and nestling in Socrates' bosom, then flying heavenward with wings full-grown, and singing to the delight

of gods and men. As Socrates related the dream, Plato's father brought in the child. The Sage recognized the fine soul in the fair body and exclaimed to his friends, 'Here is the swan of Love from the Academy.' It seems immaterial whether this happened when Plato was less than one or more than twenty or whether it happened at all. It is poetically true, for that Plato was Socrates' swan rising heavenward from an altar of love has had the confirmation of history. The dream symbolizes the effect of the meeting on Socrates.

The effect on the boy was, we are told, that he consigned his poems to the flames with the cry,

> Hither, Hephæstus! Plato needs thee now,

and devoted himself to Socrates. It was the dramatic act of twenty and as efficacious as such fiery deeds often are. Paper is more easily burned than poetry. The flaming renunciation may have meant no more than the discovery of poetic possibilities in the soul's discourse with itself. Clearly enough, Socrates, in Plato's writings, ugly yet loving beauty, ignorant yet seeking knowledge, practicing dying yet glimpsing the deathless, and revealing through his contacts with men the comedy and tragedy of the life of reason, is a figure so dramatic that it is clear that the burning of paper at twenty left more than ashes behind. Even if we are

misinformed that Socrates once said, 'What strange tales that young man tells of me,' it is a strange tale that is told, of a man quite impossible without the justice that poetry might render him. And if poets are to be excluded from the perfect city or strictly regulated, neither they nor the subtlety of their art are strangers to Plato's book which condemns them. The story of the fire is as true as we care to make it. To make of it a flash in youth prophetic of the coming man does no violence to legend. History, by proving it untrue, would not leave us wiser in Platonic lore.

The next eight years Plato is supposed to have spent in the circle of intimate associates of Socrates. 'Of this section of his life, so rich and full of meaning, we know little that is believable. Yet the great fact suffices us that in this circle, principally through the teaching of Socrates, but also through association with other pupils of Socrates who introduced him to the doctrines of Pythagoreans and Eleatics, a wholly new world of the spirit opened to him, of which he has apparently, even at that time, borne witness, in literary beginnings with the fresh enthusiasm of youth and with a power that wrestled for independence.' [1] The great fact is believable, although it is inference. Plato's own writings may give us a faithful picture of what was going on during those eight years and give us clues for de-

[1] Steinhart, *l.c.*, 85.

termining who those most intimate associates of Socrates were. Xenophon may help us out, although he mentions Plato only once and then casually. Our later authorities give us hints as to who the intimates of Socrates were, hints borrowed from sources which we wish we had in order that we might be sure that the borrowing at least did not distort the sources from which the hints were drawn. Picking up remarks scattered here and there, from authors remote from Plato's day and often centuries apart from one another, we can construct a picture of the Socratic group conformable to the general impression which the tradition as a whole may leave upon our minds. We may begin with the list, in the 'Phædo,' of the men named as present when Socrates died and supplement it with others who would surely have been there if they could, finding or inventing reasons for their absence. All this is so natural and can so readily be extracted from our sources of information, that skepticism of it looks willful. In the group thus constructed we put Plato and must perforce believe that from its members he learned much and found a lively inspiration to write.

Yet the picture may be too much simplified and is not wholly free from the suspicion both of literary effect and of moral purpose. We want to know about Plato and we know next to nothing. We project his

writings into his time and imagine a group of men spending much of their days and nights in philosophical conversation, forgetting that they probably had other things to do. There had been a great war of which Thucydides has left us an account. He conceived it to be the one absorbing topic of his day and an event so stupendous that he believed that his record of it would be 'a possession forever.' The great war had been followed by social and political disturbances of a very acute sort. But when we write the life of Plato, it is a group of students of philosophy that we see surrounding one of the strangest characters in history. We need not disbelieve that there was such a group, holding itself largely aloof from current events and talking about virtue, temperance, justice, love, the one, the many, the proper constitution of cities, and the probable constitution of the world. We need not disbelieve that Plato was one of them and found through association with them materials for his compositions. It is all too probable as the execution of Socrates on an apparently trumped-up charge seems abundantly to testify. Corrupting influences in time of war are no novelty in history. Evidently it was a very complex situation during which these eight years of Plato's life were spent. Impressionable years they were beyond a doubt. But what were the impressions made upon a son of Apollo whose mouth bees had filled with honey

and whose early poems were ashes? It's a fair question even if we disbelieve Apollo, the bees, and the fire. Stripped of legend, Plato may have been an eager student of philosophy under the guidance of Socrates, Pythagoreans, and Eleatics, but equipped with legend and a noble family we must take him before we take him stripped. This operation performed involves an inevitable simplification of events. For we must take the legend as some evidence of what Plato's temperament and genius were conceived to be. If we do so take it, can we be quite so sure of the manner of man he was during those crucial years? Was he a serious student of philosophy or an Apolline spectator of events, seeing in the contrast between the Socratic group and the stirring events of the day something worthy of a dramatic exhibition? He has made us see that contrast. What does the reader of Plato remember best? Is it a philosophy or groups of men puzzling themselves? And what was the impression on an evidently impressionable youth of a group of men worrying themselves about a multitude of ambiguous questions when the ordinary citizen probably thought there was only one unambiguous question to worry about? The situation was not simple.

We need to remember too that giving Plato a thorough schooling with Socrates, Pythagoreans, and Eleatics, after an impetuous youth, supports an esti-

mate of his thoroughness and profundity in philosophy. Educating him properly does not increase his reputation, but his reputation increases the probability of a proper education. He may have learned no more than his writings disclose, but he suggests more. He is most skillful in creating the sense of a surrounding wisdom which has sounded the deeps of life and could express itself in well-calculated measures, were it not that such an expression is too refined and perhaps too mathematical for the general ear. Whatever he knew, he appears to have known much. And we, who write his life, are subtly tempted — and gladly yield — to cast a similar spell over our handling or our sources of information. We affect to know more than we do and lower our ignorance by heightening the literary quality with which we display it. We ought, perhaps, to smile a little at ourselves for knowing so much more and so much more accurately about Plato than other writers appear to have known before us. Perhaps we do, for Plato buried has rarely been Plato dead, so that his life is ours to write in terms appropriate to his continued living through the centuries. We project into his education the promise of what he has become. Our moral purpose may do his continuing life far greater justice than an accurate biography might do, but it should make us cautious about substituting the one for the other.

The caution has a point. For our sources of information are not wholly free from indications that these eight years of Socratic companionship were marred by incidents we do not like to believe. Plato has been called a saint in our own day and, before us, he has been believed to be a man who would have been a most exemplary Christian were it not for the accident of time. He was born a pagan. Pan no less than Apollo may have mixed in him. Vain, ambitious, quarrelsome, gluttonous, intemperate, disloyal, licentious, sensual — such adjectives are not denied him. Socrates could dream of a crow as well as of a swan, a crow that scratched his bald spot and led him to remark: 'Plato will say a good many things about my head which are false.' There is that other story that, at a banquet after the death of Socrates, Plato would drink his own health in a glass of wine as the coming man and wrung from Apollodorus the cry: 'I would rather have taken the cup of poison from Socrates than that pledge of wine from you.' Such things are said by men who for some reason or other would belittle Plato's glory. They are not nice things. Scholars try to explain them all away. But the way we explain them away makes us suspect that we could explain almost everything else away as well. For we find confirmation of what we believe in the same sources which we reject when they confirm what we disbelieve. Good

things are not always spoken by the truthful and bad things by liars. The swan is a better dream than the crow, but which is a distortion of the other? The purging of the tradition and the efforts of modern scholarship have exalted the swan and left the crow in contempt or without any notice at all. Wisdom might suggest that our choice obviously does not lie between the two, for the writings of Plato outlive both his true and his false biography.

A speaker in the 'Phædo' says that Plato was ill when Socrates drank the hemlock. Others say that, after the death of the master, he fled with a few companions to Megara where Euclid had a school of his own. It is hinted that Plato fled in fear lest tyrants would lay hold of him. Although courage in literature is not the same thing as courage in life, we prefer to believe that Plato left Athens quietly to seek peace and continued study under auspices more favorable than those of his turbulent city whose policy and deeds he had come to abhor. Now began, as German scholars say, his *Wanderjähre*, in quest of wider knowledge than he could gain at home. He must have traveled far if we believe all the accounts of his journeys — to Persia, India, Egypt, Cyrene, Phœnicia, Babylonia, Judæa, and three times to Sicily, the last two after he was sixty years of age. With the exception of these last trips to Syracuse, in Sicily, the jour-

neys, including his stay in Megara, appear to have occupied twelve years. There may have been occasional revisitings of Athens during this period, but at the close of it we find him buying a piece of land in the groves of Academus and founding his school which was to be known thereafter as the Academy. The twelve years of wandering so widely over the world must have been rich in incident and must have afforded the opportunity to gather a large fund of knowledge. Incidents, however, are rare in our narratives and the knowledge gained conjectural. It is the second journey to Syracuse, in the ripeness of his age, that forms some exception to the meagerness of the general report. There are authorities for all these journeys. They are so conflicting and extraordinary that some scholars have been driven to deny the journeys altogether or to select the probable from among them. The historian finds the task difficult, but the writer of the life of Plato may transform the difficulty into illustrations of a career.

We may picture Plato defraying his expenses on his trip to Egypt by selling olive oil to the Egyptians, and conclude that he was not lacking in a sense for business. Olives are associated with him in jests, the point of which is elusive, but indicates a fondness for the Sicilian brand as a symbol of luxurious tables to be found in Syracuse. In that city, or elsewhere, he

bought a book. The place, the seller, the price, the book itself and its influence upon him, are variously reported, but the purchase, though isolated, seems to have been a matter of Pythagorean importance. One return journey from Syracuse to Athens was fraught with peril. Narrowly escaping death at the hands of an enraged tyrant, he fell into the power of enemies of Athens whose law was that any Athenian caught in time of war within their borders should be summarily executed. These folk, however, on being told by a by-stander who recognized Plato that their prisoner was a philosopher, released him, either in contempt or in honor of his profession. Or he was sold into slavery and ransomed with a sum of money that varies in amount and seems to have imposed obligations of debit and credit which were never quite satisfactorily settled. We may think of him, accordingly, as recognized wherever he went, finding friends who would rescue and aid him. He talked with a king after the manner of Solon, with readiness in repartee and moral piquancy in his replies to questions touching the greatness and happiness of men. He made an effort to turn a tyrant into a philosopher-king without success because sinister influences conspired against him and drove him away only to return again vainly to try to heal the breach between the tyrant and his leading minister, which the effort at reform had left behind to

grow into a desperate situation. We may thus see the man who put the perfect city in the sky after he had described it in a book, trying to put as much of it on the earth as the stubborn wickedness of men might allow, and so proving by practice that the conditions of education must first be right before rulers can be expected to appear who will properly govern a city. His travels illustrate him even if we throw them all away as unverified history. They are part of the life of his genius, contributing to it, perhaps, or incarnating it in events which may never have happened in the manner they are reported to have happened. Parts of that life, too, it may be said, are the things which he may have learned on his travels — geometry, the lore of Pythagoras, the teachings of Zoroaster, the secrets of the Magi, the laws of Moses, and the mysteries of Egypt. Ætna may have drawn him to Sicily the first time to see what a volcano was like, and the possibility of a political reformation may have allured him there again. Even the luxurious dinners of Syracuse need not be set aside although they are mentioned to his discredit. He could learn from them. And, as his 'Symposium' proves, he could give immortality to one dinner at least.

That second journey to Syracuse at the age of sixty deserves, perhaps, particular mention on account of its romantic character. It was the romance of Plato's

life. Plutarch tells us about it in his 'Life of Dion.' We may supplement Plutarch from certain 'Letters' which Plato is credited with writing and which have been preserved for our reading. They are alternately believed and disbelieved to have been written by Plato, but they suit Plutarch's story and it suits them. The story suits also, with a notable exception, that passage in Plato's 'Laws' which defines the propitious conditions for which a lawgiver might look in an effort to make a well-governed, happy, and virtuous city.[1] 'Give me a city which is ruled by a tyrant.' But the tyrant must be 'young, mindful, quick at learning, manly, and naturally distinguished.' He must also be 'fortunate in this, that a lawgiver worthy of praise is his contemporary and that some chance leads the one to the other.' There was the chance, but the tyrant's character left much to be desired.

Syracuse was a wanton city, firmly governed by a tyrant, Dionysius the Elder, who was ably, though irritatingly, supported by his brother-in-law Dion. This Dion, when young, had met Plato on the latter's first visit to the city to see the volcano, and had had his soul quickly inflamed with philosophy. This was what made him irritating and almost led to Plato's death on that first visit. Since Dion was, however, able and honest, and a relative besides, the tyrant found

[1] *Laws*, IV, 709–10.

him useful. The family relationship between the two was more closely tied by the marriage of Dion with one of the daughters of Dionysius. The tyrant had two, named Modesty and Virtue, and Dion chose Virtue. He seems to have had some hope of making a son of this union successor to the tyrant, but when Dionysius died, the tyrant's own son with the same name succeeded him. This younger Dionysius had been brought up by his father in seclusion, learning little beyond the making of toy wagons and furniture, for the father feared that the acquaintance of the son with the wide world might lead to political troubles. So the son, on his accession to the throne, fell an easy prey to the flatterers of the court who sought to debauch him. Then followed a contest between Dion and these seekers for control of the young man, and Dion appears to have won, temporarily at least, by engaging the youth in philosophy and intellectual pursuits which were as novel to him as debauchery. For the younger Dionysius seems to have had a good memory and to have been quick at learning. Dion told him of Plato and of Plato's capacity to turn tyrants into law-loving monarchs whose cities would be prosperous and whose subjects would be law-abiding and happy. The result was that Dionysius became eager to have Plato at court to learn from him the proper way.

Plato was induced reluctantly to come, moved by

shame principally, lest men should count him a theorist only, and also by the hope that he might cure the whole of ailing Sicily. He came in splendor. As he disembarked from his three-banked ship he was met by a royal chariot all adorned and escorted to the palace. It is even reported that the young tyrant himself drew the chariot in his joy. Dionysius sacrificed with thanksgiving to the gods. He gave modest dinners and enthusiastic receptions. The people rejoiced in the expectation of a political change. Plato was hopeful. With characteristic thoroughness he began his reform with geometry. The science became so popular that the palace was filled with dust raised by eager demonstrators who described their figures in sand thrown upon the palace floors. After a few days, at a sacrifice in the palace grounds when the herald, following the usual custom, prayed that the tyranny might last, unshaken for a long time, Dionysius, who was standing near, cried out, 'Stop cursing us.' The beginning was auspicious.

Those courtiers, however, who did not approve of Dion's plans, concluded that philosophy was to be met with philosophy. So they imported a philosopher, by the name of Philistus, who believed in tyranny instead of monarchy. He had rendered service in that respect to Syracuse before, and was highly regarded by many. He was welcomed by the opponents of Plato who

asked, Why should the Syracusans, who had defeated the Athenians in war, be now defeated by a single Athenian sophist? The consequent battle of the minds led to the expulsion of Dion from the city and the triumph of Philistus in politics. Plato, however, was retained, but kept almost a prisoner in the palace. The tyrant gave him great apparent liberty, entertained him, offered him lavish gifts, courted him, made love to him, but Plato held himself erect and constantly urged a reconciliation with Dion in the interest of justice and good order. It did not avail. Plato finally, with the assistance of friends, left Syracuse and returned to Athens. Dion had preceded him there, where he studied assiduously in the Academy and aided Plato and his friends with benefactions.

A few years later, Plato again returned to Syracuse, urged by Dionysius to come. The tyrant liked to shine as a philosopher in society although he refused to act like one in politics. He had invited distinguished men to his court in order to exhibit his powers and perhaps to excel them in argument. He used so badly what he had learned from Plato that he was constrained to send again for the philosopher, promising, if he would not come, that nothing would be done for Dion, but everything, if he would. Dion was besought in letters from his wife and sister to urge Plato to accept the invitation. 'So Plato came a third time to the Straits

of Scylla to measure again the fatal Charybdis.' He was royally welcomed as before both by tyrant and people. Expectation again ran high. But Plato had this time come to get justice done to Dion. Instead, by pushing Dion's claims, he won only the tyrant's dislike and enmity. Restricted more and more in his movements he was finally turned over to the mercenaries of Dionysius in the expectation that they would kill him, an expectation which was thwarted through the interposition of Plato's friends, who sent him back to Athens there to spend the remainder of his days in peace. Dionysius did, indeed, bid him good-bye, saying, 'Perhaps, Plato, you will accuse us of many terrible things to your fellow philosophers.' Plato, smiling a little, replied, 'May there not be such a dearth of words in the Academy that any one should remember thee.'

Such was the romance of Plato's life. Belief and disbelief have been accorded it. Whether we believe it or not depends probably less on the trustworthiness of our sources than it does on the temper of our minds and our conception of what the philosopher was like. Yet we may take it along with other credible and incredible things as illustrative of a rôle Plato played in tradition even if he never played it in Syracuse.

The last two journeys to Sicily were made, as we are told, when Plato was between sixty and seventy years

old. At forty, his other journeys were over and he settled down in Athens to found a school of philosophy which, under the name of the Academy, existed in fact or imagination for nine centuries, until, as our books say, on the authority of the Greek historian Malalas, the school was closed by an edict of Justinian in A.D. 529. In our sources the Academy is a gymnasium, a garden, a school, a sect, and a literary convention. A man like Cicero would have one of his own. Since Plato's day, the name has adorned many different human institutions, groups of learned men, museums of art, theaters, music halls, and schools for the young. There is an academic tradition. The 'groves of Academe' is a symbol. Symbol, tradition, institution, and legend have so played into one another's hands that the imagination is sorely tried when it tries to picture with confidence the kind of school Plato founded and the manner of life and teaching that there prevailed. We get no help from sources immediately contemporaneous with Plato. There is some notice, once even in Plato's writings, of a place which bore the name, but it is not the place of a school. It is commended in the 'Clouds' of Aristophanes as a better place for a young man to go than to the 'thinkery' of Socrates. 'Going down to the Academy you will run races with a sober fellow of your own age, crowned with a chaplet of reed, smelling of smilax, freedom from

politics, and the leaves of the lime, happy in springtime when the plane tree whispers to the elm.' Bodily excellence is promised from such exercise in such a place. Xenophon tells us of troops quartered there. Aristotle does not mention it. It seems to have been leveled to the ground once or twice by the first century. Pausanius in the second century A.D. says he found Plato's grave near by and later travelers sought and sometimes thought they found evidence of the philosopher's habitation. The location of the place has troubled geographers. Yet the 'University of Athens,' as it was once happily called, makes its claim upon our belief for nine centuries of almost uninterrupted continuance from master to master with a growing patrimony and reputation. It is firmly established in the Platonic tradition. Plutarch, Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and others write familiarly about it, surprising us with the much that admirers of Plato know compared with the little his contemporaries say and the little explorers have discovered. The Academy has become a cherished part of Plato's life through the centuries, but we do not know how far it was a part of his life when he lived in the city of Athens.

Nor do we know how or what he may have taught there. We are left to conjecture. And our conjectures are not a little baffled by the fact that what he is supposed to have taught, as this is represented to us by

others, bears such a strained resemblance to what we find in his writings. We are often driven to say that he wrote for the general public, but taught his pupils after some secret fashion. The great names associated by tradition with him help us a little in reconstructing the spirit of the school, although they are so often names of men more known to fame than known by substantial survival of their works. We have to search in a museum of fragments of antiquity. The search is fascinating, but the value of the result is more often measured by the skill and acuteness with which it is reached than by any solid attainment of historical knowledge. The details of the search are expanded into volumes. The results of it dwindle to paragraphs. Our own labors may not be the proper measure of the labors of the Academy.

Yet faith in the academic tradition is something that no scholar would like to renounce. That need not be asked of him. For the life of Plato is not the biography of a man. It is rather the life of a force which has persisted among very strange vicissitudes. It has worked upon men of varying temperaments, emotions, and experience. It has been as fertile in the production of things that are unbelievable as it has of things that are believable. And that is something that needs unfailing recognition. Plato may or may not have held school in the Academy for well-nigh the

last forty years of his life until he died at a marriage feast or otherwise. We may never know. He has held school in the Academy ever since for many of his disciples. This may be of more consequence than anything he himself ever taught by word of mouth to eager students. And remembering it may be of considerable consequence in an interpretation of what he has to say in his books.

That the life of Plato cannot now be written as the biography of a man, is the one solid conclusion to be drawn from our sources of information. The words of Grote written many years ago have lost none of their force in spite of the far superior and more elaborate work on the sources since his day. 'Though Plato lived eighty years, enjoying extensive celebrity — and though Diogenes Laertius employed peculiar care in collecting information about him — yet the number of facts recounted is very small and of these facts a considerable portion is poorly attested.'[1] And who was Diogenes Laertius? A man unknown to us save by his book which, as we conjecture, he wrote in the first quarter of the third century of our era, to instruct a lady in Greek philosophy. The book is a museum of antiquities which we possess in manuscripts of the twelfth century and later. It still awaits a competent curator. Diogenes himself was far from that. He

[1] Grote, G.: *Plato* (1886), 1, 246.

had no sense for history, and no sense of proportion. He was a literary gossip delighting in anecdote. Yet he has gathered in his book an astonishing miscellany of quotations and names. Without it we should have very little to go upon. 'For us, the writing of Diogenes is the chief work on the history of ancient philosophy and in its elucidation and evaluation all the threads of research run together.' [1] With him as guide we try to reconstruct the past as it was seven centuries before his day. It is a fascinating and exacting enterprise. The whole body of classical literature as it has come down to us is ransacked for criticism and confirmation. The result, in Plato's case, is, however, not the solid and well-attested biography of a man, but the discovery of a bewildering and growing tradition, about which this at least seems clear, that interest in collecting and cataloguing opinions in the quaint and bizarre, in stories and gossip, in 'successions' and sects, so far outweighed genuine historical interest that the important things we need to know to write a history are left almost wholly to conjecture. The tradition is well worth study on its own account to discover the temper of mind which from time to time seems to have controlled it. We may, for example, write with some confidence about Cicero's Plato or Plutarch's, but about Athens's Plato we remain in the densest ignor-

[1] Ueberweg-Heinze: *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1926), I, 22.

ance except for his own writings. He remains for us, not a man whose biography we can write, but an author whose attributed writings we may read and ponder.

These writings may tell us something of the intellectual themes which interested the men of his day and of his own attitude toward them. But there is one thing that we are apparently quite unable to do. We cannot correlate his writings with any confident knowledge of his life or with any assurance of his purposes beyond what we may gain from the writings themselves. For us he is well-nigh an anonymous author whose books fire the imagination and stimulate our curiosity. He is ours to enjoy and interpret.

There is, in the so-called 'Anonymous Life of Plato' of late and doubtful date, another dream of a swan besides those already related. Just before he died, we are told, Plato dreamed that he was changed into a swan and, flying from tree to tree, caused much trouble for the bird-catchers who vainly tried to take him. Simmias, the companion of Socrates, interpreted the dream to signify that all men would desire to catch the spirit of Plato, but none would succeed, for each would interpret him in his own fashion. It was a true dream, repeatedly fulfilled by admirers of Plato and to be fulfilled again in this book.

II

THE WRITINGS OF PLATO

THE *Editio Princeps*, or first printed edition of Plato's writings, was published in two volumes in folio by the Aldine Press at Venice in 1513, nearly nineteen centuries after Plato's death. It has been superseded by other editions much better, but by none with quite the same historical significance, for this is the first edition we have of Plato's works entire in the language in which they were originally written. Aldus could be proud of what it pleased him to call 'this our Plato.' It had been prepared for his press by a Cretan scholar, Musurus, by carefully comparing 'most ancient copies' of the text. The Pope was its designated recipient, for Aldus was confident that Leo X, espousing, as he was bound to do by heredity and personal attainments, the causes of peace and good literature in a war-troubled world, would find in it something to delight him. *Gratissimum praeterea futurum tibi Platonem hunc nostrum nobis persuademus, cum aliis plurimis, tum etiam, quia cum*

multis jam seculis in plura dissectus membra vagaretur, nunc illis in unum corpus diligenter collectis, integer habetur cura nostra. It was indeed true that Plato had wandered for many centuries 'in dissevered members' and was now, by his publisher's care, diligently collected into one body whole and entire. This is the impressive fact — that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, in spite of the vicissitudes of many turbulent and unlettered years during which there was far more carelessness than care of books, the scattered writings of Plato were still among the possessions of the learned world and could be brought together in one edition without the loss of a single title. 'Plato,' as a recent writer puts it, 'is the one voluminous writer of classical antiquity whose works seem to have come down to us whole and entire. Nowhere in later antiquity do we come on any reference to a Platonic work which we do not still possess.' [1]

It would be idle to conjecture what would have been Plato's fate without the printing-press and it is difficult to determine what it was before that invention, for it was then that he was wandering *in plura dissectus membra.* We have these members in greater number than Musurus knew and with more antiquity. Our problem has been more ambitious and more delicate than his. He was less critic than collector, with more

[1] Taylor, A. E.: *Plato* (1927), 10.

interest in being complete than in being thorough. We would recover the original edition from which our partial collections have descended, hoping by the aid of paleography and our knowledge of ancient Greek to restore the primitive text even as it may have come from Plato's hand. 'Thanks to the continuity of the Platonic tradition we may hope to do so; thanks to the fidelity of that tradition, it is possible for us to restore, in all its details, the authentic text of Plato.' [1] This is certainly an ambitious and a delicate enterprise. It may be rash to deny its possibility, but it is sane to recognize its temerity. The hope of doing so extravagant a thing may, perhaps, be the principal reason for believing that the doing of it is possible. For the completeness of our collection is not guaranteed by the continuity and fidelity of the Platonic tradition. That continuity and fidelity is an inference from the fact that we are supposed to have Plato whole and entire. It is natural to suppose that an author so extraordinarily preserved must have enjoyed extraordinary care in his preservation. And the care must have been the more extraordinary the more the tradition is seen to be fragmentary and careless. We may believe almost anything we will. We may see in Plato's preservation 'a special favor of fortune' or even a providential arrangement. We may see in it neither fortune nor

[1] Alline, Henri: *Histoire du Texte de Platon* (1915), 320.

providence, but the necessity of believing without evidence that the Academy preserved from the day of its founder's death a complete and accurate copy of his works for centuries, and thus provided posterity not only with the canon of his writings, but also with a sure means of judging what was genuine and what was not. We may believe that Plato's magic was the real magician, a lover himself inspiring a jealous love in those who read him. For Plato has cast a spell on many generations, the sense of a quest on the verge of fulfillment, of wonderful things glimpsed, but never clearly seen, so that keeping company with him seems to carry a promise. To lose him would be to lose much. So he was kept and treasured. So we may believe, but then it is faith that is writing history.

There is a tradition of the works of Plato, beginning in the writings attributed to Aristotle and running on to be well-nigh lost in the Middle Ages. It is true that there is not recognized in this tradition a work of Plato which cannot be matched by a title from among our collections of ancient documents. There is clear indication that the collating and arranging of Plato's writings early received the attention of men interested in books. Diogenes Laertius tells us so and mentions with some detail a collection of the first century of the Christian era by Thrasyllus which evidently had a marked effect on determining the method and char-

acter of subsequent collections. Thrasyllus may not have shown originality in what he did. There is evidence that his arrangement is a borrowed one. Diogenes tells us also of earlier and different collections, but it is the arrangement of Thrasyllus that our manuscripts reflect and that Musurus, the Cretan, followed in the Aldine edition. The collection of Thrasyllus is lost. The collections preceding it are lost. What we have to work with is a generous number of manuscripts, none earlier than the closing years of the ninth century, and some ancient papyri, very few of which give us evidence of Plato's writings prior to our own era. But the tradition does not make clear why with the materials at our command we are able to collect Plato's members together into one body. It must be insisted again that it is the success of our efforts which leads us to impute something remarkable to the tradition; the tradition does not warrant the expectation of what we achieve. It is one thing to suppose, from indications which may warrant the supposition, that there was an original complete text of Plato's works from which our manuscripts have descended and then use the resources of scholarship in attempts to restore that text. It is quite a different thing to discover what was the historical fate of Plato's writings after their author's death. The first is as possible as such hypothetical undertakings usually are.

The second does not appear to be possible at all.

These things are said, not in contempt of scholarship, but in the interest of flexibility and freedom in historical interpretation. The inexplicable preservation of the Platonic canon is imposing. We may explain it as we will, but it is certainly not its own explanation. It may suggest other problems than that of its genesis. For we have to recognize that, in spite of its alleged completeness, there is scarcely a quarter of it the genuineness of which has not at some time been doubted for reasons that vary from the superficial to the profound. The reasons are, perhaps, not as important as the fact. If we are assured that an author's works have been completely preserved and if, at the same time, we know that recurrently for centuries there has been uncertainty, sometimes quite acute uncertainty, as to which of his collected works he really wrote, we are certainly not in a situation where we can be confident of an orthodox opinion. We may dismiss as 'wildly improbable' a remark attributed by Diogenes Laertius to Favorinus that nearly the whole of the 'Republic' is to be found in a work of Protagoras, but it is not so easy to dismiss the doubts of Zeller and others about the 'Laws,' for these doubts have a firmer foundation than has our suspicion of Favorinus. It seems, indeed, that it is only by a labored reduction of doubts and by a steadfast main-

taining of a definite conception of Plato's philosophy and intellectual growth, that we reach assuring confidence that we are dealing with the question of the genuineness of the Platonic writings in a convincing manner. Yet we know nothing of Plato's intellectual growth except what we infer from his writings and what we so infer depends on which of these writings we accept and on the order in which we arrange them. The result has been to doubt less and less, to accept more and more, and to build up mainly on internal evidence a system of the Platonic writings which will be largely its own support. This method is alluring and fascinating. Its results are often very impressive. Its value as history is, however, unconvincing. One cannot prove the genuineness of a single writing of Plato by a system first built upon the supposition that that writing is genuine. It is not convincing to say: 'If the "Epinomis" is spurious, we must deny the authenticity of the most important pronouncement on the philosophy of arithmetic to be found in the whole Platonic *corpus*. If the "Epistles" are spurious, we lose our one direct source of information for any part of Plato's biography.' [1] It is not convincing if it implies that the 'Epinomis' and 'Epistles' are, therefore, genuine. But it is obviously convincing if it implies simply that the spuriousness of any writing ascribed to Plato would

[1] Taylor, A. E.: *l. c.*, 14.

necessarily eliminate it from the canon of his authentic writings and force us to consider his intellectual biography without its aid. Framing conceptions of an author's system by accepting writings doubtfully his does not remove the doubt from these writings. It only suppresses the doubt. There has been so much use of this method in Platonic criticism that there is decided need for an appeal for greater flexibility and freedom in historical interpretation. Unless these are preserved, we run the serious risk of distorting the writings to fit a scheme.

There is a further perplexing circumstance. Tradition affords us, besides a romantic story of Plato's life and an equivocal story of his writings, a story also of his philosophy. He may have been generally accessible to interested readers through his writings, but he was also made accessible through summaries and epitomes of a system of philosophy to which his name was attached. Such summaries and epitomes are an old fashion in literature and prove that others, besides ourselves, have been glad to have the thoughts of the great reduced in size for our consumption and arranged in captions for our memories. The title of the book which Diogenes Laertius wrote is: 'The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers.' It was neither the first nor the last book of its kind. Others had busied themselves with the theme before him and we have

followed him and them in many a 'history of philosophy.' The early attempts indicate that their makers were more interested in collecting and classifying opinions than in understanding them or the writers who were credited with holding them. There seems to have been something like an orthodox method of procedure. Philosophy was conceived to have its parts, its topics, its terminology, and its problems, conformably with which the opinions of philosophers were arranged. So it could happen that the living and fluid thought of a man was constrained to follow channels better adapted to a reader's memory than to its own spontaneity. It could happen, too, that the epitome of an author might become a substitute for him, having its own career and development in terms of the manner in which it was made, until it became something which the author himself could hardly recognize as having had its original impulse in him. Epitomes read first tend to bias the reader's mind and lead him to see in an author's writings, read subsequently, things he might otherwise never have seen at all, and not see other things which otherwise might have been vividly impressive. Plato's 'Phædrus' itself warns us against even the author's own book as something dead compared to his living speech. But deader still are the writings of a man when turned into a classified summary. Whatever else may have been

the fate of Plato wandering through the centuries, it was his fate to assume a form which his writings themselves do not give him. He has been made over.

This is undoubtedly testimony to his genius and it may also be warrant for making him over again many times. It is worth doing, not only because some of his books, if they appeared for the first time to-day, would inspire the attempt, but especially because tradition has fastened upon him an equivocal position in the history of philosophy, the position of a great teacher and founder of a school whose accredited writings, however, bear so little the stamp of his alleged profession or the reputed tenets of the school. We are asked to think of him as teaching physics, mathematics, astronomy, logic, psychology, ethics, politics, dialectics, as engaged in what we call scientific research, and as lecturing on subjects too profound for the general ear, but his writings reflect only incidentally an activity so wide, thorough, and systematic. He is supposed to have had a well-defined and coherent system of thought, the expression of which by others is, however, interwoven with ideas and mannerisms which are alien to his writings. Not only is his reputed professional activity little reflected in his works, but these in their turn reflect still less the activities of a teacher or a school. We seem forced to conclude that here was a man whose professional and literary interests were

markedly different. 'We have to discover Plato's ultimate metaphysical positions indirectly from reference to them' elsewhere.[1] Now it is common enough for men to write one way and think and teach another, but the fact does not necessarily force a commentator to reconcile the divergence. It may leave him free to take the writings as he finds them, at their face value, and do what he can with him. Plato as reputed teacher and investigator and Plato as man of letters go so ill together that liberty to treat him as a man of letters is not to be denied.

Such liberty is here claimed. It may be exercised extravagantly, for it will be exercised under the convictions that we have no solid knowledge of his life or the history of his writings and that we know him not as a man, but as a piece of literature. To conjecture the man from the literature is tempting and hazardous. Ancient tradition made him Apollo's son and modern enthusiasm, although less paganly mythological, has often given him a character no less tinged with divinity. 'Simplicity and temperance were indeed required by his principles, and are expressly ascribed to him; but the entire freedom from wants and possessions to which Socrates attained, would not have suited a man of his education and circumstances. Himself full of artistic taste, he could not deny all worth to life's ex-

[1] Taylor, A. E.: *l. c.*, 503.

ternal adornments; extending his scientific research unreservedly to all reality, he could hardly, in ordinary life, be so indifferent to the outward, as they who, like Socrates, were satisfied with moral introspection. Socrates, in spite of his anti-democratic politics, was, by nature, a thorough man of the people; Plato's personality, like his philosophy, bears a more aristocratic stamp. He loves to shut himself up in his own circle, to ward off what is vulgar and disturbing; his interest and solicitude are not for all without distinction, but only or chiefly for the elect who are capable of sharing his culture, his knowledge, his view of life. The aristocracy of intelligence on which his State rests has deep roots in the character of Plato. But precisely to this circumstance are owing the grandeur and completeness that make his character in its particular sphere unique. As Plato in his capacity of philosopher unites the boldest idealism with rare acuteness of thought, a disposition for abstract critical enquiry with the freshness of artistic creativeness; — so does he, as a man, combine severity of moral principles with lively susceptibility for beauty, nobility, and loftiness of mind with tenderness of feeling, passion with self-control, enthusiasm for his purpose with philosophic calm, gravity with mildness, magnanimity with human kindliness, dignity with gentleness. He is great because he knew how to blend these apparently conflicting

traits into unity, to complement opposites by means of each other, to develop on all sides the exuberance of his powers and capabilities into a perfect harmony, without losing himself in their multiplicity. That moral beauty and soundness of the whole life, which Plato, as a true Greek, requires before all things, he has, if his nature be truly represented in his works, brought to typical perfection in his own personality. Nor is the picture marred by incongruity of outward resemblance with inward reality, for his bodily strength and beauty have been especially recorded. But throughout, the most striking peculiarity of the philosopher is that close connection of his character with his scientific aims, which he owes to the Socratic school. The moral perfection of his life is rooted in the clearness of his understanding; it is the light of science which disperses the mists in his soul, and causes that Olympian serenity which breathes so refreshingly from his works. In a word, Plato's is an Apollo-like nature, and it is a fitting testimony to the impression produced by himself on his contemporaries, and by his writings on after generations, that many myths should have placed him, like Pythagoras, in the closest union with the god who, in the bright clearness of his spirit, was to the Greeks the very type of moral beauty, proportion, and harmony.' [1]

[1] Zeller, E.: *l.c.*, 41–44.

Plato may have been all that. It would be idle to try to refute it and a little mean, perhaps, to remember that a bad man may write a good book. Yet it is well to be sober and to remember that the divinity of Plato is the effect of his writings on posterity and not the cause of their production in ancient Athens.

It is not to such causes that we turn, for we know too little about them. We turn rather to the writings themselves, for these we have. In spite of the unstable tradition which supports them, they are clearly of ancient date. And, although, as Gilbert Murray puts it, 'two hundred years of carelessness' preceded any real care of books we know much about, it is not rash to jump these centuries and place the writings in Plato's own day. But which of them he wrote, is left to conjecture. Taking them just as we have them, no one would readily believe that the same man wrote them all. Without the support of tradition, we may be confident that criticism would dissever Plato's body into more members than its wandering fate can show. Without the support of the external evidence which is accepted as adequate, it would be difficult to believe that the same man wrote the 'Republic' and the 'Timæus' or the 'Symposium' and the 'Laws.' The stylistic schemes invented to test genuineness are too fine spun to carry conviction far beyond the minds of their makers. The plain fact is that unity of author-

ship is not revealed throughout and where it appears to be, there are often conflicts hard to reconcile. Yet Plato may have written everything ascribed to him and even some of the books that are called spurious. This is hard to believe, but the kind of thing involved in believing it has happened repeatedly in literary history. Who, if he were not told, would believe that George Meredith wrote both 'The Shaving of Shagpat' and 'The Ordeal of Richard Feverel'? The same author may write astonishingly different books, and this is often more common with the great than with the small. It is testimony to a fertile mind and a vivid imagination. And a fertile mind and a vivid imagination are what the Platonic writings reveal. The problem how far there is unity of authorship will be left here untried in the interest of showing something else.

Nor do the writings display much unity of other kinds. They are, to be sure, written in the same language with the characteristic Attic speech and they have superficial similarities due to the genre to which they belong and the technique which characterized it, but they are notably independent of one another, with cross-references very rare and more perplexing than helpful when they occur. One, when read, does not call for another to complete it, although it is repeatedly hinted that more might be said with more time or on a more fortunate occasion. Surprise awaits the reader as

he passes from one to another. The dinner he enjoys in the 'Symposium' is the kind of thing which the 'Laws' would exclude from the city for which its prescriptions were intended. He is led to believe that virtue can be taught because it is knowledge and cannot be taught because it is a gift of the gods. He finds the same subject treated now in seriousness, now in play. He is driven intermittently to skepticism and to confidence. He is wearied with trivialities and exalted with sublimities. He is bound to have a varied and exciting experience. But one thing he will not find. He will not find clearly expressed or even definitely outlined something he can recognize as a system of philosophy. That he must make for himself if that is what he wants. If we look for one system of philosophy in the Platonic writings, we shall probably not find it, but if we read them with an open mind, we may find hints of nearly every philosophy ever written.

The writings have long been called 'dialogues.' It is a Greek term and probably meant to the Greek mind something a little different from what it has come to mean with us. It did not emphasize the mutual participation of the members of a group in a conversation so much as the listening of its members, interrupted by their questions, doubts, difficulties, assents and dissents, to a leader who propounds a theme to them and largely controls its development. Like its

cognate term 'dialectic,' it reflects the fact that the Greeks of Plato's day, in their exchange of opinions, were speakers and listeners rather than writers and readers. Books there were. Men wrote them and read them, but they were more the treasured possessions of a few than the current medium for the exchange of ideas among the many. The messenger was more common than the letter. Men did not go to libraries to read. They went to dinner, to the market-place, to the entrances of theaters, courts and places of assembly, to the covered walks in gardens and places of exercise, to listen and to talk. Young men got the rudiments of learning at home, but they got their education through friendly and intimate association with their elders in public places or by joining a group under the leadership of some man who had won distinction in one or more of the varied human callings. These leaders were sometimes organized into professional groups with more or less organized places of resort and with traditions and a regimen which savored of antiquity. We may think of schools, for we have the word from the Greek, but we should remember that, whereas we say that a young man went to school 'to study,' the Greeks said that he went 'to hear.' Aristotle, in saying that 'of all the senses sight is the most ennobling, but hearing the most instructive,' was not making a psychological observation so much as re-

cording a recognized fact. We must think primarily of speaking and hearing, and when we think of Greek philosophy, we should disassociate our minds from the printed page, remembering the dramatic quality of uttered speech with its impact on the ear and its ready stimulation of gesture and posture of the body, its hesitancies and rushings, its sayings and unsayings, its eloquence and its silence. Indeed, we may suspect that many an obscurity which we find in ideas — perhaps the 'ideas' of Plato even — reflects a transition from the spoken fluidity of speech to a fixation of it which tended to make language less a fickle medium of communication and more a stable reflection of existing things.

The verb 'to say' could do duty as an intellectual term, so that in Aristotle's methodological writings, Socrates *is said to be* a man more significantly than he *is* one, and 'being' not so much *is* as *is said* in many ways. Speech was, with the Stagirite, as natural an operation as any other and an outcome of those forces which had produced man, a body and soul. To get things properly said, therefore, was as much a natural fulfillment of their possibilities as to get them hot or cold. Thus logic and the logos — both derivatives of the Greek verb 'to say' — in which we have found so many perplexing doctrines and difficulties, may have been relatively simple things to the Greek mind. Connecting

as the two did the natural act of speech and what that act effects, the logic and the logos of things was probably nothing more strange or mysterious than the ratio — a Latin word for logos — of two to four. To have things as ideas may have been little more than to transfer them to sight or ennoble them in vision. Theory, a word taken from the activity of the eye, might come to take the superior place and turn philosophy into a theory of things, a theoretical life, a steadfast vision or intuition. Yet the dialogue and dialectic keep the flavor of the spoken word. Speech was a real power used for influence, persuasion, and effect. Its instrumentation in words could readily pass from the naturalness of conversation to a deliberate technique whereby meanings might be clarified and enforced. To say things over and over or through and through was an effective way of disclosing what a man meant or whether he meant anything at all. It might carry him to the point where speech failed and left him in no little wonder, face to face with the unutterable. The dialogues of Plato are performances amply illustrative of all this, and the methodological writings of Aristotle are consciously systematic of it.

There is, then, justification for regarding the Platonic dialogues as the realistic representation of something habitual rather than the invention of something new. They reflect popular and familiar usage. They are

probably much more naïve and true to life than the philosophical dialogues a modern might write with a sophisticated consciousness of his method. Stories of conversations they are, told, possibly, for the delight of the recipient rather than for the deliberate purpose of arriving at a result or propounding a doctrine. Their frequent inconclusiveness, uncertainty, and lack of definite result may indicate their faithfulness to fact and not the tentative efforts of their author to reach or suggest conclusions. The likelihood of this is enhanced by the fact that the dialogue was a recognized literary form. Sophron lay under Plato's pillow. 'Socratic Discourses' were recognized by Aristotle as one form in which poetic or literary activity expressed itself. They were written by others than Plato. Indeed, Greek literature, from Homer and Hesiod down, reflects an audience spoken to, with the dialogue repeatedly appearing in narrative and often with a quality as dramatic as if it were rendered on a stage. Even the matter-of-fact Thucydides, when he would acquaint the reader with the motives, reasons, and ideas which moved the participants in the great war he described by summers and winters, put these participants on a stage and let them talk. He expressed his consciousness of what he did and claimed an effort at exactness of reproduction. To see in the Platonic dialogues, then, anything unusual, or extraordinary, so far

as their form is concerned, may be only to reflect the sentiment of a later time. To expect from them the kind of result that one might expect from a clearly reasoned treatise may be only to distort their natural purpose and intent. They exhibit the talking man, speech entangled in its own subtlety, and that may be, as well as any other, their purpose and intent. It may, too, be the sufficient reason why it is so difficult to extract a system of philosophy from them.

The dialogues evidently define their own audience. There is a picture of 'this our Plato' in our histories of philosophy, walking or standing in the Academy, lecturing profoundly to students as a modern professor of philosophy might. It may be correct. It is, however, not a picture which the reader of the dialogues would draw. In them we are taken not to a university, but to the steps of a court-house, to the court itself, to a plane tree by a limpid stream, to a walk on a highway, to the popular resorts of men and boys, to the homes of the rich, to a dinner of friends, to the prison, to the chamber of death. We do not go to school. We go to the haunts of men and boys, conscious of a city's pulsating life, its conflicting interests, its ambiguous practices, its justice and injustice, its realities and its visions, conscious above all of man and his loves, of man who would talk himself into conviction only to find talking inadequate. With generals there is talk

about courage, with sophists on wisdom, with rhetoricians on rhetoric, with psychologists on the soul, with friends on friendship, with politicians on politics, with the pious on piety, with lovers on love, with the dying on death. Here is no savor of the classroom, no odor of the pedagogue. A curious, ugly man goes about with his questions and talk springs into being as naturally as blows from a quarrel. It is not an audience of men and boys in school which the dialogues reflect. It is an audience of men and boys in a city, playing, loving, ambitious, seeking, perplexed.

If there is any controlling unity in the Platonic dialogues, it is of the kind implied by the immediately preceding paragraphs. It is a unity of attitude differentiating itself in view of scenes appropriate to it. There would be justice in comparing Plato to a portrait painter who chose his subjects because their countenances revealed a character or mood which, seen by others, would provoke the recognition of a likeness to themselves. The justice lies in this, that the reader of Plato is pretty sure to have a personal experience, to find his own thoughts involved in a rather intimate way, which is far more the way of self-reflection than the way of criticism of what he reads. A probe goes into him exploring places in his mind and character which are sensitive to the touch. Or, if he does not experience this inward revelation, he may experience

an outward one and behold the human scene with a sense of irony, sympathy, or concern. He may smile or be stirred to think of doing something. For the effect produced by Plato is easily a wistful detachment from life or an earnest desire to enhance it. Both motives may interplay, so that one works while one smiles. There is also in the dialogues an apparent sense of modernity upon which readers of to-day often comment. The reason is not that Plato's ideas are new and ahead of his time, for they are at least as old as he is and reflected elsewhere in antiquity. The reason is rather that the modernity of Plato is his clear vision of human nature. He saw Greeks in his city, but he saw men in his imagination. He could, in a measure, lift them out of their immediate environment of time and place and exhibit them as almost of any time and place so far as circumstances were similar and situations comparable. That is why he is read and reread, why interest in him is so little archæological. This is only saying that his writings are great literature. He belongs to that human library of books to be read irrespective of the circumstances which produced them. His unity resides in the characteristic which put him there.

This may be defined as the dramatization of the life of reason. Intellectuality is put on the human stage to play its part as a character. It is an instrument also, a tool, the means and method of arriving at sound

conclusions and regulating profitable action. In the dialogues, however, it is lifted out of its practical efficacy and let play. It exhibits its humor and pathos, its comedy and tragedy. It often goes down to its own defeat, defeated by circumstance and its own subtlety, broken off by the inevitable intrusion of affairs, mastered by irrational impulse or seduced by the stories men tell themselves to bolster up a faith they cannot establish by reason. Plato is credited with being a great logician, a man of power in argument. He may have been that in the Academy. He is not that in the dialogues. Here we are confronted with the devices which men use to get the better of themselves and others. Tricks abound. Words are wrested from their familiar use to perform feats for which they were never intended. Adjectives turn into nouns which, losing identification with any concrete thing, turn the adjectives into shadows of something man never saw. Calling a man just, instead of being allowed to stand as the commendation of his skill in adjusting conflicting interests as best he can with the least amount of practical damage, is turned into an inquisition of justice which seems to demand the institution of the perfect city before man can be just at all. We walk on the earth to get eventually lost in the sky. We cry for a method that will carry us somewhere, but we are given 'dialectic' which is only an invitation to

keep on as before, with now this, now that, everlastingly saying yes and no. Now, all this is a human and not a Platonic peculiarity. This is what we are given to. It is what often turns us into philosophers. Plato makes a show of it, a veritable drama of the mind. He is the playwright of the reason as Euripides is of the emotions. If he has a philosophy, it is philosophizing — the soul operating with the heavenly visions which it sometimes sees and the earthly limitations which it always knows.

There are, however, restrictions to be put on the attempt to find a unity in this or in any other fashion. The dialogues are not all such as these paragraphs would make them out to be. Some of them refuse the characterization altogether and others admit it with difficulty and straining. The temptation is to pick and choose among them, and the temptation is the stronger the more conscious we are that there is no sure test of what Plato really wrote. This temptation will not be here resisted, but it will not issue in an effort to settle questions of authenticity. Plato suffers little from any disillusionment about his divinity. He rather gains by a recognition of his humanity. Admitting that he wrote most of what is ascribed to him, it is surely more extravagant to claim that all that he wrote is excellent than to claim that some things which he wrote are not. We have little more than the dialogues to guide us.

They are as uneven in merit as the work of many another to whom greatness is not to be denied. They abound in trivialities which may have seemed important to the Greeks, but which can be important to us only through an act of faith. Some of them are about as futile as anything ever written. A Platonic dialogue of a certain type is very easy to write, for it is possible to extract from their number a technique and method for the production of more, a technique and method which some of them do no more than illustrate, barren of worthy content or imagination. They may have occasional passages which a reader remembers after he has forgotten what else they contain. It seems at times as if method and technique had run away with substance and become more important than any enlightenment of the mind. There are some which express in downright fashion ideas on the nature of things and on legislation which have, however, little more than an archaic interest or illustrate an immature imagination. Let Plato have written them all, but if he did, then we have on our hands a problem which we can solve, if we do not pick and choose, only by forcing upon them an interpretation which must studiously neglect much that they contain.

So here there is to be picking and choosing. Preference will not, however, be given simply to one dialogue as over against another. Some of them are so preëmi-

nent and so self-contained that they merit consideration in their own exclusive setting. But even these will be subordinated in a measure to the themes they illustrate. Accordingly it is with some of the major themes of Plato that we shall be concerned, themes like love and education and politics and death. They are pervasive even when Plato may be said to nod. He has done something with them rather unforgettable when once it has been sympathetically appreciated. He has caught a distinctly human quality about them and held it a moment for us to see. There is a severe realism about him which checks the soul in its too ambitious flight by the intrusion of the body's presence, disillusioning us often without corrupting us. He can make us see the futility of thought and yet keep us believing in its efficacy. There is a kind of magic in him which both charms and instructs. We read, sometimes convinced, always allured. As we read, there recur again and again the themes with which man ever busies himself. We see man as Prometheus, no longer a hero in a legend, but still intelligence in chains which he need not break to be free.

III

THE PERFECT CITY

A GREEK was known in terms of the family and of the city he came from. These two sources of his being were intimately blended by the circumstances attending the history of his people. We may follow with confidence the movement of his organized social life from family economy to city economy and observe that, when he reflected, he seems to have been more interested in what the movement produced than in the causes which brought it about. He thought of his city with love and pride, as something like his family enlarged and organized, in idea at least, as a self-contained unit for the well-being of its members. This idea received a simple, yet thorough, expression in Aristotle who defined man in his social relations to his fellows in terms of the *polis* or city, calling him a 'political animal,' because it seemed natural for men to live in cities and arrange them for their own good by means of a suitable constitution. Man alone, he said, 'has a sense of good and

evil, of just and unjust and the like, and it is sharing in these things which makes a household or a city. . . . He who is unable to share or out of self-sufficiency has no need, is no part of a city, but is either beast or god.' [1] The practical working out of this fellowship in good and evil, just and unjust and the like, gave to a city its *politeia*, politics or constitution. This might be good or bad in its workings and was consequently something which might be improved if men thoughtfully took pains to consider what they were about. Politics might be made consciously deliberate and the perfect city might at least be conceived.

In this, as in many other respects, Aristotle worked out a systematic expression of a dominant motive in Greek life. Politics, however, was not his creation. He had the experience of many cities and of several centuries to draw upon. He dealt with an enterprise of long standing which had received attention and expression before him. But there is truth in saying that politics was a Greek creation. The conception of the city, to which Aristotle gave, perhaps, more adequate expression than any other Greek before him, was old and popular, and constituted, for the Greek mind at least, a distinction between themselves and their neighbors. These latter had the habit of conceiving the communal life of men in terms of submission to some imposing

[1] *Politics*, 1253 b, 16 f.

power above them. Their cities belonged to something else than the citizens, to a tyrant or a sovereign. Greek cities, in profession, did not. The local revolutions among the Greeks, their civil wars and their attitude toward Asia, reflect a lively consciousness of the distinction between cities where men live in illustration of a power which they serve submissively and cities where they live in illustration of a natural fellowship worthy of being conceived intelligently and ennobled by friendship. So we may say that the Greeks were political-minded while their neighbors were not. Since, however, the word 'politics' has now so changed its meaning from the Greek usage, we may say that between the Greeks and their neighbors there was a political difference of recognized consequence. In the contrast between Greece and Asia lay the contrast between organized freedom and imposed submission. And quite apart from the contrast with Asia, the Greek city would be in its own terms the embodiment of organized freedom.

Examples abound. Thales, long reputed to be the font and origin of philosophy in Greece, on being asked what was the strangest thing he had ever seen, is reputed to have replied, 'A tyrant growing old.' Tradition has handed us a letter of his, written to Solon and inviting that sage to come live in Miletus where nothing dreadful would happen to him. Thales added,

however, 'If you are distressed because the Milesians also are governed by a tyrant — for you hate all rulers — you would yet enjoy living with us, your friends.' Unfortunately we do not have Solon's reply. Yet we must believe that this accredited ancestor of Plato hated tyrants and loved his fellow Athenians, for Herodotus tells us that Solon, after making laws for the good of Athens, voluntarily left the city for ten years in order that neither he nor the Athenians might be induced to change them before the fruits of their wisdom were manifest. He would have a city governed by well-considered laws rather than by fickle men and swore his fellow citizens to make no changes in his absence. Such stories reflect an old political tradition. Cities had laws and honored as benefactors the men who made them. Tyrants might be seen. The sight was not strange, for even Solon had to yield to Peisistratus. But a tyrant growing old was a different matter. It shocked the civic imagination. The turn of fate might produce him, but would surely hurl him down. Solon visited tyrants and among them Crœsus in all his splendor. This ruler would have Solon pronounce him the happiest of men, but the sage named obscure Greeks instead, men who, having lived commendably, had died with the esteem of their fellows high. The Asiatic in anger asked why he had been overlooked and was told that his splendor and power

were not guarantees of happiness and that he might die in misery. We must look to the end and the end of Crœsus was not yet. Would the tyrant grow old and die in happiness as Tellos of Athens did, who had lived in a prosperous city, done as well as a man may, seen his children's children established and met a shining end, dying in his city's defense? A man — and certainly a tyrant — must die before the estimate of his happiness can be made.

Herodotus furnishes a less legendary example in his own estimate of the conflict between east and west. He would expose the reasons why Greeks and barbarians fought with each other. There were stories ready to his hand, stories of the rape of women in which now the one side, now the other, was blamed, until 'the Greeks, for the sake of a Lacedæmonian woman, raised a great army and, going to Asia, destroyed the power of Priam.' He brushes these stories aside. 'I do not come saying that these things happened so or otherwise, but I know the man who first did wrong to the Greeks, and naming him, I will then go on with my story.' The man was Crœsus. He was the first barbarian known to subdue Greeks and lay them under tribute. 'Before the reign of Crœsus, all the Greeks were free.' Herodotus thus looked upon the clash between east and west with the eye of a Greek, seeing in it a clash of systems. The Greek

polity was at stake. And there is little doubt that the clash between east and west stimulated among the Greeks a consciousness of the fact and converted a natural habit into a political profession. The habit of freedom did not necessarily imply the absence of slavery, for the Greeks held slaves and Aristotle could commend the practice as a wise use of men naturally inferior in those qualities which entitle citizens to manage their own affairs; but the habit of freedom did imply that cities were autonomous and independent. They regulated themselves as they saw fit. They were not submissive subjects of a power above them which ruled in its interests rather than their own. Asia was a menace to freedom so conceived. Greeks and barbarians fought, not over women, but over a question of policy. We may find economic reasons at the bottom of the conflict, for the east could not support its system without trying to suppress its competitors, but the conflict did stimulate the political consciousness of the Greeks and make them feel that the love of freedom was better than the love of gain.

One cannot fix a date when the political thinking of the Greeks first received something like formal and systematic expression. System evidently followed experience, which framed rules of practice and sometimes led to the formulation of political maxims, summarizing accrued wisdom in a phrase or elevating it to the

dignity of principles which might be called philosophical. The literature from early times is full of indications of this. It reflects a background which we might call political if we remember that natural fellowship which Aristotle regarded as the foundation of a city. From this background of a conscious natural sociability flash out comments on men and affairs, estimates of human conduct, ideas of civic virtue, and recognized types of political organization. The Greek drama, utilizing legendary stories of the past, afforded apposite comment on current events. Æschylus could exalt the idea of justice in his 'Supplicants' and Aristophanes could caricature current political ideas in his 'Lysistrata.' How far political ideas had crystallized into recognized politics before Plato's day is indicated for us by Herodotus in his story of how Darius became king. The story is hardly credible, but it may be the more illustrative on that account, indicating less what really happened than what a Greek might conceive as appropriate to the occasion.

A band of conspirators, having overthrown the Magi, met to consider what form of government they should now set up. They formed themselves into a sort of constitutional convention. At this meeting speeches were made in favor of democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. Herodotus tells us that the Greeks did not believe that such speeches were made, but that they

were made *however* (οὖν), or, as the Germans would say, *doch*. We may readily believe that Greeks found it difficult to give credit to the possibility of such a political discussion in Persia. It was out of place. Yet a revolution in Persia might afford an opportunity to lay before a Greek audience political possibilities worthy their attention. Whether actually made or not, the speeches are a comment in the Greek spirit and may be reproduced here in illustration of political ideas prior to the birth of Plato.[1]

'When the tumult had quieted down and five days had passed, the rebels against the Persians took counsel about the whole situation. Speeches were made which certain of the Greeks do not credit. They were made, however. Otanes urged that matters be put in the hands of the Persians as a whole, speaking as follows: "To me it seems that one man ought not longer to be monarch over us, for that is neither pleasant nor good. You know how far the insolence of Cambyses went and you have had your own experience of the insolence of the Magian. How can monarchy be a fitting thing when it lets a man, without responsibility, do what he will? Standing in it, even the best man stands outside the established laws. Insolence is bred in him by his present goods and jealousy is implanted in a man from the beginning. With these two, he has every evil

[1] III, 80–83.

quality. He does many childishly reckless things, partly from being filled with insolence and partly from jealousy. Yet a tyrant who has every good ought to be free from jealousy. The reverse, however, is true of him in his attitude towards the citizens. He is jealous of the movements and lives of the best and delights in the worst of the townsmen. He is the readiest to take in slander. He is the most inconsistent of men. If you honor him duly, he is offended because he is not served in excess. If one serve him in excess, he is offended, as at a flatterer. But now I come to speak of the worst: he sets aside the laws of the land, does violence to women, and puts men to death without trial. The rule of the many, however, in the first place has the most beautiful of all names, 'equal rights,' and in the second place does none of the things the monarch does. It gets offices by lot, holds office with responsibility and brings all proposals to the common council. My opinion is, therefore, that we, giving up monarchy, increase the power of the many; for the many are all in all!"

'Otanes advanced this opinion, but Megabyzus urged reliance upon an oligarchy, speaking as follows: "Let what Otanes said to put a stop to tyranny be said by me also, but his advice to put the power in the hands of the many fell short of the best opinion. For nothing is more senseless or more insolent than an un-

practical mob. It is wholly unendurable that men, fleeing from the insolence of a tyrant, should fall into the insolence of the undisciplined populace, for the former, if he does anything, does it knowingly, but the latter have no knowledge at all. How can one know who has not been taught and who has seen nothing really fitting? The populace rushes headlong into things, like a river swollen in winter. Let those who wish the Persians ill be ruled by the populace, but let us, choosing a group of the best men, put the power in their hands, for we ourselves shall be of their number, and with the best men it is likely that the best counsels will prevail."

'Megabyzus advanced this opinion, but Darius was the third to make known his own, saying: "To me, what Megabyzus said about the rule of the many, seems well said, but, about oligarchy, not well. For take these three, democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy, and let each be at its best, I say that the last excels by far. Nothing can appear better than the rule of the one best man. For, with a mind like himself, he manages the many blamelessly and well conceals his plans against hostile men. In an oligarchy, however, with many practising virtue for the public good, violent personal hatreds love to arise, each man wishing to be leader and make his own opinions prevail. So they come into great hatred of one another, from which

factions arise, and from factions, murder, and from murder it is a step to monarchy. And herein it appears how monarchy is the best. Again, with the populace in power, it is impossible that there should not be corruption. But when corruption arises in public life, hatreds do not arise among wicked men, but strong friendships. For those who corrupt public life, do it laying their heads together. This goes on until some champion of the populace makes them stop. Thereupon he is admired by the populace and, from being admired, is accordingly declared monarch. In this, he also shows how monarchy is the best. To sum it all up in one word, whence and by whose gift came our own freedom, from a democracy or an oligarchy or a monarch? I hold, therefore, that since we had our freedom through one man, we should defend it in the same way. Besides this, we should not change the laws of our fathers when they work well, for that is not better."

'These three opinions were laid before them and four of the seven men decided for the last. But Otanes, who wanted to give the Persians equal rights, since he had been worsted in his opinion, spoke again as follows: "Fellow rebels! It is evident that one of us must become king whether he is chosen by lot or whether we let the Persians as a body make the choice; or by any other machinery. But I will not enter the contest with you, because I wish neither to rule nor to be ruled.

I stand aside, however, on this condition, that I be not ruled by any one of you, neither I myself nor my descendants for ever." Since the six agreed to what he proposed, he did not enter the contest, but sat apart. And to this day his house continues to be the only free house in Persia. It is ruled only so far as it consents and does not break the laws of the Persians.'

Tradition informs us that Herodotus expelled from his native city of Halicarnassus the tyrant Lyadamis, but was later disliked by his fellow citizens. So he removed to Thurium in Italy, where the Athenians were setting up a colony. Here he is thought to have died before Plato was five years old. He seems to have known the Athenians well and to have admired their intelligence. He is amused, however, by their credulity in accepting as Athena the large, handsome woman whom Peisistratus dressed up to aid him in his political schemes. It seems clear that the Father of History, who 'saw the cities and knew the minds of many men,' was himself a political-minded person. How far he is representative can be only a guess. Yet he implies an audience and an atmosphere. The speeches of Otanes, Megabyzus, and Darius may not have been credible as uttered in Persia, but they are credible as illustrating in some measure the extent to which the formulation of political ideas had gone by the time of Plato's birth. They are illustrative of what experience was doing to

the Greek mind. Cities in Greece were not having an easy time politically. The struggle with Asia had stimulated their pride, their power, and their self-consciousness. They grew rapidly, and although they could combine against the Persian, they could quarrel amongst themselves when free from that external pressure. They were given to making themselves over and revising their constitutions. It was the day for ambitious men, rich in opportunities for leadership and public career. All this implied political discussion. And it is clear that when Plato wrote the 'Republic,' he had an audience already well prepared by events. The substance of the incredible speeches in Persia finds enlargement and detail in his pages. The 'Republic' implies an audience and an atmosphere similar to that which the history of Herodotus implies, but more sophisticated and self-conscious, more experienced and disillusioned, more intellectually mature, yet not in the sense which justifies us in supposing that in the 'Republic' we have passed from public to academic discussion. The house of the rich Cephalus where Socrates engaged young men in debate and the circumstances surrounding the occasion suggest something quite different from formal instruction. It suggests, rather, that the perfect city was a popular theme. Plato takes his turn at it. The types of government and the types of men engage the interest of the son of

Apollo. How stands the theme of the perfect city with him? What estimate does he make of political discussion and political ambition?

If further proof is desired that there was, in Plato's day, an audience, popular rather than academic, social rather than scholastic, actively interested in political discussion, the proof is to be found in the comedies of Aristophanes. These the populace went to see. They went to see them at a time when the affairs of Greece were distracted, when all sorts of novel proposals were in the air, and they went for amusement and the relief which laughter brings. His success shows that he knew his audience. His moral purpose may have been, as is so often insisted, to be a champion of 'the good old order of things,' but his artistic purpose was to satirize and caricature, to make fun for an hour or so of what others took seriously for days. Parallels between him and Plato abound, notably in the matters of communism and greater sexual freedom and these may indicate that he had Plato in mind as a fit subject for caricature. When, however, one takes into consideration the literature of the period generally, it is far more likely and obvious that the parallelism reflects popular rather than personal opinions. It may be observed that historians of Greek philosophy usually pay little attention to the literature outside what they regard as their special field. Even without Aristotle and Plato

to help us, we could, from the remainder of the literature of the Greeks, form a fairly satisfactory idea of their political practice and philosophy. What we should then principally lack would be the illuminating comments of these two exceptionally reflective men. Their assistance to us is less in the way of subject-matter and information and more in the way of synthesis and interpretation. The literature generally, as already remarked, has a political background. Rarely is a writer of the fifth and fourth centuries free from a very definite consciousness of it. Historians, dramatists, orators, popular lecturers, teachers — all give evidence of an engrossing interest in political ideas and of variety and novelty in programmes for civic reform. The significance of Plato is not in being, in any sense, a pioneer in the theme; it is rather in his manner of handling it. His genius may reside in what he conceives the theme of the perfect city to be. The provisions for the management of the city may be lacking in originality. They may be only subsidiary to a philosophical estimate of political idealism. An abundance of material was ready for such an estimate.

It is worth remarking that we read of Plato's perfect city under the title 'Republic.' Titles have a subtle influence and this title should warn us not to read with a mind biased by ideas of what we think a republic is, and to remember that a Greek book has received a

Latin title. Greek books with Latin titles often indicate more than a convenient literary device. The title does not change the contents of the book, but it may so predispose the reader's mind that he sees the contents in a perspective alien to them. Cicero wrote, in imitation of Plato, a book and called it 'De republica.' He was largely responsible for the title we use in Plato's case. *Res publica* was something dear to Cicero's heart. He exalted it and classified men as good or bad as they cared much or little about it. He conceived Plato as having an interest similar to his own and in this was not wholly wrong. For by *res publica* he did not mean a form of government. He meant, quite literally, *the public thing*, the thing which every form of government, no matter what, should be solicitous to keep intact. It meant something moral, social, and economic, something to be wisely administered rather than the form of its administration. He specifies such things as the treasury, the shipping, the roads, the public wealth, the temples of the gods, the customs of ancestors. Things like these made up the public thing and that government was to be condemned which did not care for them adequately. Governments were stewards of *res publica*. With Plato governments were also stewards and stewards of something no less concrete — the city. Now the city was the family enlarged and organized. Like a family it called for manage-

ment, but its management was judged good or ill, not so much in terms of what it managed as in terms of the traits its management displayed. These were summed up in one word ἀρετή which we are wont to translate by the Latin word 'virtue,' but of which we get a better notion by remembering that it was a collective term for such specific traits as justice, wisdom, temperance, and courage. These were, indeed, virtues, if we will, but Plato gives us abundant evidence that their common quality was difficult to define independent of the occasions which prompted their being. Thus they might find some unity in a knowledge of the occasions which they fitted. For ἀρετή connoted the 'fitting' and to find the fitting in any case, one must have knowledge of the case. So 'virtue' could look like 'knowledge' without being identical with it. For a city to be virtuous meant that in its management it displayed justice, wisdom, temperance, and courage, but to do this implied knowledge of what befitted the occasions arising in its management. To care for this was something like Cicero's care for the public thing, but it emphasized the manner of caring rather than the thing cared for. For Plato, the perfect city was not simply one in which its possessions were intact, but one in which they were intact in certain ways. Cicero was not neglectful of these ways, but he was less scrupulous about them. His emphasis was basally different.

Yet the word 'republic' probably implied a closer kinship between Plato and Cicero than it does between Plato and us, who find difficulty in disassociating it from a form of popular governmental organization. With us it has largely lost its moral, social, and economic connotations and is rarely an equivalent for 'commonwealth.' So when we read the 'Republic,' we are apt to think more of the 'constitution' of the city than the virtues which its management should reveal. The details of method and organization impose on us. We ask what sort of a 'republic' or 'state' would Plato set up and we answer, one that is socialistic or communistic. We are apt to marvel a little that he anticipated so many 'modern' ideas, forgetting how his ideas originated and that he was writing for Greeks and not for us. We are naturally at liberty to take him as the writer of an Utopia or a prophet of the Ideal Republic. But he wrote for a contemporaneous audience. His perfect city is the imperfect Greek city stripped of its imperfections. Moderns may find in it a pattern to follow or reject, but it is difficult to believe that he intended it for their consideration. He was a Greek, conscious of the Greek love of cities, of their struggles and tumults, of their failure in justice, wisdom, temperance, and courage, and, in spite of this, of their profession of these qualities. He did not invent his theme. He found it ready to his hand. Knowing what the

rivalry between Greek cities had been, what it had done to them, and how still they would boast of their virtue, he would tell in his own way what the perfect city is and what the passion for it implies. He would take the political strivings of his people and carry them up into the atmosphere of philosophy and then look at them to see what they might mean for the citizens who walked the streets of the all too imperfect cities which he knew. Was it a programme he gave them to follow or an estimate of what their striving meant?

The answer to this question is to be sought, not in the details of organization, but in the temper, spirit, and atmosphere in which they are developed. The details are illustrative rather than controlling. Many of them had been brought forward by others and represented proposals by reformers of various sorts. Some of them were in operation in other Greek cities than Athens, in Sparta, for example. Indeed, so much is reminiscent of Sparta that Plato is often supposed to have glorified the constitution of the great rival of Athens to shame his own city by contrast. Let that be as one will have it. It is clear, however, that the greater freedom given to women, the provisions for training and common meals, the scheme of education, the division into classes, the community of wives and children, the regulation of property, and provisions similar to all these are not proposed because the individuals affected

by them would naturally choose or enjoy them. It is recognized that this is just what they would not be likely to do. The people must be cajoled and deceived. As plain as Greek can say it, they must be told lies to be induced to be what they are expected to be. The details are wholly in the city's interest, that it may be perfect. They set the stage, as it were, on which justice, wisdom, temperance, and courage may appear in their true characters, to evoke the admiration of the spectator or astonish him as he beholds the startling contrast between their true character and their disfigured appearance on the street. He is to see, not happy men, but the perfect city. The difference between the two is of a very profound sort. It may seem inconceivable that in the perfect city, the citizens should not be perfect, and being perfect, they should not be happy. To conceive something so strange looks like a gross contradiction. Behold the virtues; those excellent things which men profess to value above all others, which they profess to strive for, which they profess to defend, and which they demand of their fellows and their city — shall men refuse them when clearly seen? Strangely they do refuse them when they set about to win their own happiness by their own wit. They then become unjust, unwise, intemperate, and cowardly. Let them then see their illusion by looking not at happiness but at virtue. Then they may see

that this unwonted vision implies unwonted changes in their city, things of which they may have heard and scoffed at, but which a little reflection may lead them to take seriously. The vision of happy men pales before the vision of virtue.

In this perspective and freed from the details of organization, the outlines of the perfect city are reducible to two simple, clear, and well-nigh self-evident propositions. It is a city in which every citizen, without interfering with his fellows, does for the city's good that which by nature he is best qualified to do and finds his happiness in the doing of it. It is a city in which government is exercised solely with a view to maintaining a citizenry of this sort and to keeping it free from internal discord and external invasion. Such a city is the perfect city. Its defining propositions imply the virtues and make them more readily definable than they are when looked for in the turmoil of imperfect cities. Wisdom is implied and is that power in the city which discovers natural aptitudes, and the ends and occasions they fit. Justice is implied and is that power which keeps every citizen and every part of the city true to its own proper and natural business and free from interference with others. Temperance is implied and is the power which holds in subjection the forces of corruption. And courage is implied and is the power which does not hesitate to do what is

necessary both within and without for the city's defense. Let the details of organization be what they will, only let them be worked out in strict conformity with the defining propositions and the implied virtues, and the constitution of the perfect city will be framed.

In some such way we may summarize what the 'Republic' declares the perfect city to be. But the summary frees us at once from geographical and historical limitations. Plato has that effect. Although he drew from the experiences of his people and wrote for them to read, the result here, as so often elsewhere, is something to attract reflective minds in all times and at all places. The perfect city has ceased to be Greek only and has become human. One can frame it in idea in New York or Calcutta, in Canton or Moscow. It is the city of which, not politicians, but the political-minded dream — everybody happily at his natural and proper task, government single-minded to this end, and wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage shining as lights to illumine and as powers to control. It is hard to better. And it is doubtful whether any writer since Plato has given to men a clearer or more conclusive outline than he gave to his own people to behold. They may have copied him, but they have not bettered him. To want any other city is to want something short of the perfect. They who want it have it here defined, the object of the heart's desire — hearts

sensitive to folly, injustice, intemperance, and cowardice. Plato would have his people see it and has left it for us also to see.

There is, however, some mockery in the vision. It may flash out as a revelation bringing our search for a definition to an end and look beautiful in its simplicity and truth. Were the city realized, our troubles would be over, we should have the perfect. But sober reflection can convince us that the perfect city is about the easiest thing in the world to define. One has only to eliminate in idea the imperfections from the actual. This is a natural and seductive operation in which we all indulge at times. It soothes the conscience and fosters the sense of nobility, being like a moral cathartic which purges us of baser thoughts. It is quite harmless when it does not overflow into action. If it does, then folly, injustice, intemperance, and cowardice have to be met and the perfect city vanishes to leave the imperfect behind. The young men with whom Socrates talked in the 'Republic' were doubtless typical young men of their day. They were at a very rich man's house. Some of them were rich themselves. They had, evidently, plenty of time to waste and they wasted hours under the spell of that snub-nosed man, getting convinced of simple and self-evident propositions. They became high-minded and exalted in the process. They went home thinking no doubt what a wonderful

city Athens would be if it were only perfect, and forgetting probably that Socrates had slyly put the perfect city in the sky. They were too excited about the profitableness of justice and too interested in the community of wives and children to remember. Many a reader forgets it too, or, if he remembers it, takes it simply for a warning that the times are not ripe for such perfection. But into the sky it goes. There men may look at it and walk, perhaps, with a soberer tread upon the earth.

It is natural, perhaps, to forget that upward flight of the city, for Plato says much to lead us to tie it to the earth. He talks of carpenters and kings, of soldiers, cooks, poets, and physicians, of playing on musical instruments and exercising in gymnasiums. And he would effect the perfect city through education. Such matters keep us in touch with familiar things on earth and lead us to believe that we are dealing pertinently with what we are used to. And recourse to the sky is represented somewhat as a last resort, for the possibilities of earth seem to have been exhausted. Yet as one reads again and again, it is earth's inappropriateness to perfection that grows in stern reality. It is this imperfect world we see and see more clearly as we see the perfect city in the sky. This enlightenment is not free from a touch of irony. It looks a little as if Apollo's son were laughing at us, as a god might who loved men

for their enthusiasms and was amused at them for their self-deceptions. Their professions and their practices do not match. The former make them godlike, men kindled with a divine spark, while the latter demonstrate their fleshliness. They deceive themselves in thinking that freedom from the flesh can be won by better organization of the flesh. They must flee to the sky where the flesh doesn't matter. There, community of wives and children will be perfectly proper and father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister be terms of beautiful salutation only. But this does not warrant transporting the practice to earth, where profession would be one thing and practice another with something amusing or tragic as a consequence. A man should know what he is about, know his own mind, and, perhaps, the best way of doing this is to be conscious that the vision of perfection is the absence of earthly difficulties and not their effective organization. The perfect city in the sky is good to look at. It shows what might be if this and that were not. And in that showing, this and that become clearer as what they are. So man may become a philosopher, not wholly wise and free like the gods, nor wholly ignorant and enslaved like an animal, but a lover of wisdom, converting the smile of irony into a gentle benediction. Be this as it may. We must at least remember, that Plato let Socrates put the perfect city in

the sky and it was perfect because it lacked the soilings of earth.

Plato, then, defined the perfect city. Apparently he told his fellow citizens that it was something, not to look for, but to look at. If, however, they would go about setting it up on earth, establish and maintain it, he had something to say to them about the method necessary for so sublime an undertaking. It seems unlikely that sky and earth will carelessly join in happy union to produce without labor the thing desired. Their nuptials must be attended to. Earth, at least, must be prepared. The sky will, doubtless, freely shower its gold on a ready Danaë. Provision must be wisely made for the event. So Plato attends to the provision. What a city on earth needs — and we do not now speak of its moral or political bettering — grows out of the natural wants of many people living together. Economic advantage dictates a division of labor and so classes of workers arise whose rivalry produces the rich and the poor. The pleasures of men call for satisfaction and produce a host of entertainers, cooks, confectioners, poets, and providers of entertainment. Ills due to nature or excess cry for physicians. Expertness in any task or art requires teachers. Excess of production and the value of foreign goods creates commerce. Internal disorders and external dangers make government and defense necessary,

with city officers, guards, army, and navy. Men and women living together will naturally beget children. As the city grows, public building and expense increase, requiring fiscal management. Things like these a city and especially a growing city is led to by a kind of natural necessity and will provide for them in some way or other, for better or worse. With them, a city may not get on very well, but without them, it will not get on at all. Its prosperity depends, therefore, on the way these things are regulated. Wise regulation, further, depends, first, on having governors who are wise and, secondly, on having the citizens as a whole like-minded, so that the wisdom of the governors will be cheerfully acknowledged and obediently followed. How may this happy state of affairs be brought about? The answer is, by education. But how may education be made effective? By putting it in the hands of experts, namely philosophers. 'One such expert, having a persuaded city, may accomplish all that is unbelievable now.'

This argument could hardly have been original with Plato. It is too characteristically human. 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.' Right education is the acknowledged panacea for all our ills. If only we had it! If only there might be that expert and that persuaded city! The cry is the faith and the despair of the

reformer. Plato's argument can be credited neither with profundity nor with falsity. It is thoroughly sound. It is so obvious that it would be foolish to try to refute it. The interesting thing about it is its effect on the mind. How does one react to it? The young men in the 'Republic' laughed. They had seen experts and heard of them. They had seen philosophers. A city in such hands would be the laughing-stock of the world. Common-sense is quite sure about it. Name the philosophers of to-day and then ask the city to be persuaded! The philosophers may be willing enough. The city, however, prefers to have them lecture and write. It has a deep suspicion that a place governed by them would not be habitable. It is pleasant to hear them talk about the perfect city, but it would not be pleasant to have them do more. When they do more there is apt to be trouble instead of perfection. Mankind generally has laughed like the young men in the 'Republic.'

But those young men were induced to change their minds. The man who put the perfect city in the sky knew how to meet an emergency. He began by laughing with them. Then he led them gently to consider why it is that poor opinions of philosophers prevail, finding the causes partly in the egotism of philosophers themselves and partly in popular misconceptions about them. He talked about philosophy and the philosophi-

cal temper and disposition. He showed no mercy to posers, men who boasted of philosophy, but had it not, and, in contrast to these impostors, drew the picture of the genuine philosopher. The genuine are quite different from the counterfeit. They love the knowledge of that reality which abides ever and wanders not by generation and decay. They are jealous of the whole of it, unwilling to divide it into parts, some less and some greater, some noble and some ignoble. They love truth and hate falsity. They are sober men, not money-lovers eager for costly things. They are liberal-minded, for small-mindedness cannot dwell in the soul which reaches out for both the divine and human. They are not afraid even of death. With such qualities, they cannot be hard to deal with or unjust. In short, they are men of mind, distinguished, gracious, lovers and kinsmen of truth, justice, courage, and temperance. Would not such men be competent rulers of any city? If power were given to them and the people persuaded to trust them, would any one claim that the perfect city could not be realized?

It was all too clear to be denied. There was a feeble protest at first by one named Adeimantus, 'the fearless,' reputed brother of Plato, but soon Socrates had them all saying 'of course,' 'to be sure,' 'by all means,' 'yes, indeed,' and the like. They were charmed. So subtly were they led, so neatly was the net woven in which

they were caught that they did not see that genuine philosophers are to be both the producers and the products of the right education. 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.' But who can so train him? Why! those who have been so trained! We must first, said Socrates, find a clean slate or else rub clean the one we have. Neither, he admitted, is easy. Then let us picture what we might have if we could succeed. That is easy. There is much in the 'Republic' which is sound or which deserves at least serious attention by the practical-minded. We should be better off — as the Athenians would have been — did we follow many of its precepts. Clearly the world would be better off by a better exercise of generosity and thoughtfulness. Yet it is difficult to escape the feeling that the son of Apollo is not smiling at his fellow citizens and through them at mankind. Not that he would ridicule us, but that he would show us our elusive dreams and make us see how human we are. Our hope is in those genuine philosophers who should be our kings. And we must get them through education. There is the human predicament. The perfect city goes into the sky to be brought down by educators who will so make us over that we shall be fit to be its citizens. We must have at least one of them, and what is more, we must have also a persuaded people.

The theme of the perfect city would seem, then, to be one with which Plato dealt in irony, like a man saying less than he thinks, letting our ideas run their course to mock us a little in the end. The ironic note is struck in the opening of the 'Republic.' There was a festival in progress in honor of a Thracian goddess, Bendis, an obscure divinity to whom, it seems, human sacrifice was once offered. That cruel rite had been displaced by pageantry. Socrates had seen the pageantry at the Piræus and was returning to the city, but was stopped by friends who persuaded him to stay for a torch-race on horseback at night. So they all go to the house of Cephalus, the father of one of the group, where this old man was discovered seated, ready for the evening sacrifice with a garland on his head. He welcomes Socrates and the two fall to talking about old age and wealth. Cephalus takes both calmly and happily, acknowledging that old age has its attractions and that his great wealth, partly inherited and partly acquired, gives him abundant means of making good any injustice he may have done in the past. He dwells on the theme, claiming for himself a matured wisdom and experience beyond the ordinary. Socrates asks him, What is justice? In his old age and with his great wealth, justice was something which Cephalus was prepared to do. Asked what it is, he welcomes the interruption of his son in the answer, and goes laughing to

his sacrifices. Let rich old men do justice, but let young men discuss it. For it is something to do when you can, but when you can't, it is something to talk about — a theme for the young, and opportunity for the old and the rich. We should forget neither Cephalus nor Bendis. The former disappears to the sacrifices, the latter reappears once in the words of one of the disputants, advising Socrates of his own part in her celebration. An atmosphere surrounds the discussion of justice and the perfect city. There is festival, there is age, there is youth, there is wealth, there is leisure. And there is Socrates to hold up the reflecting mirror. We are to see a spectacle.

What, then, is justice? There was in the group a Thracian man named Thrasymachus from the land of Bendis. He listened to citations from poets, to illustrations drawn from pilots, farmers, shoemakers, cooks, doctors, soldiers, bricklayers, and the like, until he could stand it no longer. He exploded. This was all nonsense. Justice, he claimed, is a political matter. It has to do with the government and management of citizens in a city, and if you look for it there you will find it invariably to be nothing but what those who have power find fitting.[1] He backs up his assertion by

[1] 'The interest of the stronger' is, in my opinion, a very poor translation. Thrasymachus is speaking of those who have power in cities and what they find it expedient to do.

an appeal to history and the ways of men in cities. He is met with disapproval. This doctrine that 'might makes right' is repellent. Socrates attacks him while the others listen gratefully. He bewilders Thrasymachus and entangles him in a net of words until the latter subsides and sits, almost without remark, through the remainder of the discussion. He is subdued, but there he sits, the devotee of Bendis, to whom human sacrifice was once made, looking on. He gets his revenge. Justice becomes a political matter. Giving up the search for it in individual men, in cooks and bricklayers, the searchers turn to the city to find it there. And what do they find? They find that it would not hurt the city much if a carpenter should try to be a shoemaker, or the one break into the other's trade, but it would ruin the city if a laborer or a merchant, filled with pride and neglecting what nature fitted him to do, should break into the government or if subordinate classes in the government should usurp the functions of their superiors. That would be unjust, so justice is the city's virtue which keeps them from it. Thrasymachus has had his revenge. He couched his opinion in unlovely words. The same opinion in lovely words and after much wandering about in elevated discourse, is swallowed without a grimace. It was this Thrasymachus whom Socrates drove to admit that the just are happy and the unjust

miserable, that not misery but happiness profits a man, and that, therefore, my good fellow, injustice is never more profitable than justice. Then it was that the Thracian said: 'Let this, Socrates, be your sacrifice at the feast of Bendis.'

There is much discussion of the profitableness of justice. Glaucon, another reputed brother of Plato, is not wholly satisfied with the rout of Thrasymachus. Perhaps the Thracian's remark stuck in his mind. He is, however, impressed with the popular belief that injustice pays if you are not found out. He recalls an old story of the magic ring which a shepherd, the ancestor of Gyges, found. The shepherd, after a violent storm, found himself on the edge of a chasm which an earthquake had formed. He went down into it. He saw there a brazen horse with a dead body greater than that of a man inside. From its finger he took a ring of gold. Shortly after, he met with his fellow shepherds to prepare a report to the king of Lydia about his flocks and herds. The shepherd found that if he turned the bezel of the ring he now wore on his own finger inside, his mates talked about him as if he were absent. When he turned the ring around again, they observed his presence. So he tested the power of the ring and found that it could make him unseen at will. He then got himself made messenger to the king. Having seduced the queen, he slew the king with her help and

so gained a throne. Would a man be just if he had the Gyges ring?

To the support of Glaucon comes his brother Adeimantus. He urges that justice is valued for its own sake neither by people generally nor by parents in the rearing of their children. It is valued for the reputation it brings a man in his social and business relations and for the blessings which it is supposed the gods will bestow upon the just in the next world. Having the reputation is the important thing, for if a man is just, but has not the reputation for justice, it avails him not. Moreover, it is generally admitted that the practice of justice is difficult and unpleasant. Men have to be bribed by rewards and punishments to follow after it. Many tell us, like Homer and Hesiod, that even the gods will wink at injustice, if properly paid. What value, then, has justice in itself? Is it not simply a reputation which a man gets if he can and not a virtue in his soul which he prizes no matter what the consequence may be? So the brothers of Plato join in urging Socrates to tell them something more than he told Thrasymachus. 'Do not show us simply by definition that justice is better than injustice, but what each of them, of itself, does to the man who has them, and whether, if unseen by the gods and men, the one is good and the other evil.'

Socrates compliments them, quoting a poet's verse in their honor. He cannot believe that they believe

that injustice is better than justice. He would remove doubts from their minds if doubts they have. It is then that he proposes to quit looking for justice in men and to look for it in the city where, no doubt, it is written in letters larger and easier to read. It is as if he turned a ring on his finger. Certainly we are prevented from seeing things as they really are. We are led to see perfection instead. And having seen justice as a sweet and pervading influence which keeps the city in order and is the source of its well-being and benefits, it is not so hard to find it also in man, the same sort of influence, giving harmony and health to his soul and being the source rather than the product of his reputation. 'Have we not disposed of the other things in our argument and not brought in the rewards and reputations of justice, as you say Hesiod and Homer do, but have found justice to be the very best thing for the soul itself and just things to be done by it, whether or not it has the ring of Gyges and besides this ring the cap of Hades?'

In this world the just have their reward. Gods and men will shower blessings upon them. But these are nothing compared with what awaits the just and unjust in the other world. 'This should be heard, in order that each of them may take away at last what, by our argument, it is their due to hear.' So, at the very end of the 'Republic,' Socrates tells the story of Er.

The man was found, after ten days, on the battlefield, apparently dead, but untouched by decay. He was laid out for burial, but after two days he revived and told a strange tale of his twelve days' experience. When he fell, his soul with many others went to the other world, where he was told that he should observe carefully all he saw and heard and report it afterwards to men. It was a strange place in which he found himself. There was a parting of ways at which judges sat who sent the good souls upward to the sky and the bad downwards beneath the earth by ways prepared for them and received by other ways the souls returning from the sky or from beneath the earth. The returning souls had much to tell each other of what they had experienced above and below, and what they had to tell corresponded with their looks. Those from below looked dry and dusty, while those from above looked pure. The former had been punished ten times for their evil deeds and had hardly then escaped from their torment, for guards barred their exit refusing to let by the particularly bad, especially tyrants who had ruled their cities ill. The pure, however, had glorious things to report. Both good and bad had been shown for a thousand years the merits of their former lives on earth.

The souls, however, had not returned from above and below simply to tell each other of their experience.

They were expected to be born again for another sojourn in the world and were given a free choice of the kind of life they then would lead. They were assembled and this speech was made to them by their instructor: 'Hear the words of the maid Lachesis (the Allotter), the daughter of Necessity: Souls of a day, another mortal round of the death-bearing race is to begin. Your destiny will not be allotted to you, but you will choose your own. Let him who gets the first choice be first to choose a life to which he will be bound irrevocably. Virtue is without a master. He who honors her will have more of her, he who dishonors her, less. The chooser is answerable; god is not.' Then numbers were thrown out. Each soul picking up that which fell nearest to him found the order in which he was to go forward and make his choice. There was an abundance of lives to choose from and of all sorts. The souls were cautioned not to be in a hurry or to worry if their choice came late: 'Even for the last comer, choosing sanely and living seriously, there remains a life to be desired and not bad. Let not the first to choose be careless, nor the last lose heart.'

Then the first to choose rushed up, thoughtless and greedy, and chose the greatest of tyrannies. He did not notice that along with other evils he was fated to eat his own children. When he found this out at his leisure, he beat his breast and wept, and forgetting

what he had been told, blamed chance and destiny and everything else than himself for his choice. He had come from the sky and had lived his former life under an ordered *politeia*, having his share of virtue by habit, without philosophy. Strange to say, not a few of those from the sky were caught in the same way. They had not known the discipline of suffering. Many of those from earth, because they had known suffering themselves or seen it in others, did not make their choices on the run. And stranger still to say, perhaps, was the fact that the souls seemed to have learned nothing from their thousand years above or below, but chose their new lives in likeness or in contrast to their old. It was a sight, pitiable, laughable, and strange. Distinguished souls were there — Orpheus, Thamyras, Ajax, Agamemnon, Atalanta, Epeus, and the laughter-making Thersites. Orpheus chose to become a swan because he had been slain by women; Thamyras, a nightingale; Ajax, a lion, unwilling to become a man again because he remembered the judgment about the arms of Achilles; Agamemnon, an eagle, because of his hatred of men and the evil he had suffered at their hands; Atalanta, an athlete, because she envied the honors men won in their games; Epeus, a skillful woman, changing his sex; Thersites, a monkey. Birds and beasts there were which changed to human beings. By chance Odysseus came last of all for the last choice.

Mindful of his former suffering, he spent a long time looking about for a life of rest from ambition, the life of a quiet man, and found it with difficulty lying somewhere neglected by the others. Seeing it, he said he would have taken it even if he had had the first choice; and he chose it gladly. Of animals, some changed into men and others into other animals, the unjust into the wild and the just into the tame.

The souls, having made their choices of life in their allotted order, went to Lachesis, who gave to each the destiny which was to guard its life and fulfill its choice. Then they went to Clotho, under whose hand and whirling spindle, the fate they had chosen was fixed; then, to the spinning of Atropos, who makes that which is spun, unalterable; then, under the throne of Necessity. When they had all passed, they moved to the plain of Forgetfulness through fierce and stifling heat. There are no trees there, nor anything which the earth grows. At evening they encamped by the river of Carelessness, whose water no vessel can hold. Of it each was forced to drink, and, drinking, forgot. At midnight, when they were asleep, there was thunder and an earthquake. Suddenly, they were carried up to their birth, each in its own way, like shooting stars. Er was prevented from drinking of the water, but when or how he came back to his body he did not know. Unexpectedly opening his eyes at dawn, he saw himself

lying on the funeral-pyre. 'And so, Glaucon, the tale was saved and not lost, and may save us, if we believe it.'

The story is the 'Republic's' own comment on itself. Coming as it does at the end, something to send a man home remembering, after the perfect city has been put in the sky and made possible on earth through the control and education of genuine philosophers, after justice has been sought and found, found by turning a Gyges ring to blot out the sight of human imperfections, and after it has been found to be worthy of all praise, the thing in which gods and men delight and which the gods nobly reward after death, it is natural to ask what it is that we should specially remember. Socrates seemed to think there was safety in believing the tale. What then is the great reward which awaits us all, the good and bad alike, at the judgment-seat? Not the thousand years of bliss nor the thousand years of pain, for these turned out to be of little value when the real test came. Disembodied souls may repeat eternally the characters they made on earth and learn nothing. They are deathless after their kind. A thousand years of being what one has been is little reward. The great reward, the longed-for reward, which a thousand years there or even a moment here might make the more longed-for, is simply the chance to live again after a free choice of life. Then let Lachesis, Clotho, and

Atropos spin if they must. Could there be a greater reward? Is not the longing for the perfect city the continued human prayer that the gods will give men the chance to make things over with a clean slate or a slate rubbed clean, the chance for men to choose freely what they want and having chosen, have it immutably? That is what the 'Republic' seems to say when read in the light of the story at its end.

It was perhaps a little more than chance — perhaps the deliberate intention of Apollo's son — that the first choice fell to the soul from the sky, one whose former life had been spent under an ordered *politeia*, and the last to Odysseus. They were typical of contrasted disciplines. Like Adam and Eve, confronted with a choice, the soul from paradise fell and blamed others for his conduct. 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' 'The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.' But the crafty old sailor, conscious of battles, wanderings, shipwrecks, and evils of men, looked to the future and chose gladly out of what he could find. Earth may be a preparation for heaven, but heaven is no preparation for earth. Once in the perfect city, we must be content to stay there, doing without question and without choice what nature or our educators or the gods have assigned us. Justice pervades the city and gives it the only animation it has. Justice gives to every deed its quality;

the deed does not grow into its own justification. Virtue is a matter of habit only, like sleeping and waking. There is no philosophy there, for its work is over. The genuine philosophers have long since known all there is to know and they keep that knowledge going, not through the repeatedly baffled quest and love of wisdom, but through justice, justice which animates them and makes them, without choice, what they are. None of them may descend to earth unless willing to become a man. But the imperfect city — its consequences may be imperfect choices. They may be made in blindness, ignorance, and folly. They may be made only with the dim light of a troubled past experience to guide them. They may be made out of admiration or disgust. Yet each choice is another chance. The gods do not wait until we are dead. We may. Then they give us a thousand years to show us what little profit there is in waiting. They have given us the vision of the perfect city, the power to define it, and the hope of establishing it by education. But they laugh a little at our management. Our politeias are provoking. They so often forget that while a man may see the perfect city in the sky, he needs the discipline of earth. He may be as happy as a man can, if, when he sees the one he does not forget the other. Such men may be called philosophers, and claim, with confidence, the right to criticize, because they have seen the better,

and, with modesty, the chance to manage, because they have not lacked the gymnastic of labor.

Plato's 'Republic' has cast a spell on many centuries and many readers. Reformers have embraced it as a gospel of improvement and governments have proscribed it as a dangerous book. Read with detachment — and it may be so read, without the preliminaries which have marked this study of it; read as it might be read by one who accidentally found it somewhere without knowing its author or its date — it looks more like a comment on politics than a contribution to political theory. It looks as if Plato were, a little ironically, trying to make his countrymen conscious of what they were doing in changing their city over and over. Or it looks as if he, as a son of Apollo might, were dramatizing the political life of man, putting it on the stage for men to see, with a realism which would neglect neither the generous elevation of a Glaucon or an Adeimantus nor the brutal frankness of a Thrasymachus. We are not to make a city, but see men plan the making of one, see them provide for their fellows, sitting around a table or meeting on an appropriate occasion. They have not a clean slate, but they want one. So they begin rubbing. They find the sources of trouble and rub them out. Much depends on who does the rubbing, and when. We need not stop

to ask for particulars, whether we are to hit upon ignorance or poverty or capital or inequality of opportunity or sex or marriage or the family or property or the machine. Socrates seems to have rubbed particularly hard on poets. He saw in them base imitators who gave men only an imitation bed on which to lie. Is it, then, that he would show them the real bed? Lying on it, we dream of the perfect city and get up to make our bed more comfortable. To do this, there must be more than dreams.

IV

EDUCATION

Lysimachus and Melesias were two undistinguished citizens of Athens, and Nicias and Laches two of her distinguished generals. They meet and converse, with Socrates standing by.

'*Lysimachus*. You have seen the man fighting in armor, Nicias and Laches. Why we, Melesias, here, and I, asked you to see him with us, we did not tell you at the time, but we will tell you now. We think that we ought to be frank with you. Some laugh at such things as these and, if one consults them, do not say what they think; but guessing at the advice sought, they give something else than their own opinion. But we, believing you to be expert and ready to say exactly what you think, would take you into council about the matter we want to lay before you. The thing to which I have already made so much of an introduction is

this. We have two sons. This, Melesias's, has his grandfather's name, Thucydides. Mine here, has also his grandfather's name, that of my father. For we call him Aristides. Now it seems to us that we ought to provide for them in the best way possible and not do as other fathers do when their sons become young men, letting them go about doing what they will. We should now begin to provide for them as well as we know how. So, knowing that you also have sons, we have thought that you have provided for them, both in other ways and how they may become best educated. If, however, you have not often given your minds to this, let us remind you that it ought not to be neglected and ask you to join with us in making some provision for our sons.

'How this occurred to us, Nicias and Laches, you should hear, even if it takes more than a minute. Melesias, here, and I eat together and our young men eat with us. Now, as I said in the beginning, we are going to be frank with you. We have, each of us, much to say to the young men about the many illustrious deeds of our fathers, what they did in war and what in peace, looking after the needs of the allies and of this city; but of our own deeds, neither of us has anything to say. We are ashamed of this and blame our fathers for it, because they let us enjoy ourselves when we were young, while they looked after the affairs of others.

We point this out to the young men and tell them that if they are careless of themselves and do not obey us, they will be unheard of, but if they are careful, they will soon become worthy of the names they bear. Now they say they will obey; but we look to this, what they should study and practice in order to become most worth while. Somebody told us of this study, that it would be good for a young man to learn fighting in armor. He praised the man you lately saw demonstrating and urged us to see him. It seemed good to go to the man's show ourselves and to take you along, both as fellow-spectators and as advisers and sharers, if you will, in the provision for our sons. Now your part, therefore, is to advise us both about this exercise, whether you think it worth learning or not, and about other things, if you have any study or exercise to praise for a young man and anything to say about our common undertaking, what you make of it.

'*Nicias*. I, Lysimachus and Melesias, praise your spirit and am ready to join you. I think Laches, here, is too.

'*Laches*. You think correctly, Nicias. What Lysimachus just now said about Melesias's father and his own seems to me very well said and touches them and us and all who do the business of cities, that to them those things hardly amount to anything which affect children, and those other things, which, being their

own, they belittle and treat carelessly. You have spoken well, Lysimachus, but that you should have called to us for advice about the education of the young men, and not to Socrates here, surprises me, for in the first place he belongs to your district, and then he makes it his business to be wherever there is anything of the sort you are seeking for young men, any good study or exercise.

'*Lysimachus*. Is that so, Laches? Has Socrates here made anything like this his concern?

'*Laches*. By all means, Lysimachus.

'*Nicias*. And I can tell you the same as well as Laches. For just lately, he recommended to me a man, a music-teacher for my son, Damon the pupil of Agathocles, and most accomplished of men, not only in music but in other things also, skilled in whatever you wish him to do with young men of that age.

'*Lysimachus*. Men of my age, Socrates, Nicias, and Laches, do not get to know the younger men because we have so much to do at home on account of our age. But if you, son of Sophroniscus, have any good advice to give a man of your own district, you ought to give it him. You're bound to. For you happen to be dear to us on your father's account. Your father and I were ever companions and friends, and no difference arose between us before he died. And my memory brings me round to what was just now said, for these young men,

talking together at home, often mention Socrates and praise him highly. I, however, never asked them if they were speaking of the son of Sophroniscus. But tell me, boys, is it this Socrates whom you mentioned so often?

'*Son.* Certainly, father. It is he.

'*Lysimachus.* It's well, Socrates, that you honor your father, the best of men, and it's well too that your interests are ours and ours yours.

'*Laches.* Yes, indeed, Lysimachus, do not let go the man. For I have seen him elsewhere honoring both his father and his country. In the flight from Delium, he retreated with me, and I tell you if others had had the will to be like him, our city would have been honored and would not have fallen so low.

'*Lysimachus.* This is high praise, Socrates, you are getting from men who are readily believed, especially in those things for which they praise you. Be sure that I am glad to hear that you are well thought of, and count me among those who think well of you. You ought to have visited me before and led us in getting acquainted, as would have been proper. But now, from this day, since we have come to know each other, you shall not do otherwise, but share our thoughts and get to know these young men: so you both would indeed preserve our friendship. Surely you will do this and we will remind you of it again. But what do you say

about what we began to speak of? What do you think? Is it a useful exercise for young men or not, to learn fighting in armor?

'*Socrates.* In this matter, Lysimachus, I shall try to advise you in any way I can, and do, besides, all you ask. However, it seems most fitting to me, since I am younger than these men and less experienced than they are, that I should first hear what they have to say and learn from them, and, if I have anything to add to what they say, to make it known then and persuade both you and them. — Well, Nicias, why doesn't either of you speak?

'*Nicias.* Nothing hinders, Socrates. To me at least, it seems that this exercise is useful for young men to learn, in many ways. For it is a good thing for young men not to spend their time elsewhere on the things they like to spend their time on, but on this, since it must increase their bodily strength — for it is not easier than other gymnastics, nor takes less labor — and besides, it is particularly suited to a free man, and riding, too. For in that contest where we are athletes and in the things with which our contest confronts us, these exercises alone exercise us in the instruments which have to do with war. Then, in the fight itself, this exercise will be helpful, when one must fight in line with many others. But it is of the greatest aid, when the lines break and you must fight man to man,

either attacking one who is resisting you, or, in flight, resisting another who is attacking you. A man who had learned this, would suffer nothing from one assailant, perhaps not from many, but in every way would have the better of it. And besides it calls out the desire for another fine exercise. For every one who has learned to fight in armor, would desire next the exercise of tactics, and getting this and being ambitious, he would push on to everything belonging to generalship. And it is evident that the possession of these things, all knowledge and study of the things of which this science is the teacher, are excellent and worth much for a man to learn and practice. We would add to this a no small condition, that this science would make a man himself not a little bolder and braver in war than the same man would otherwise be. And we do not disdain to say, although it may appear of little moment to some, it will give a man a better figure in places where he ought to appear with a better figure, while at the same time he will appear more terrible to his enemies on account of his good figure. To me, therefore, Lysimachus, as I say, it seems fitting that the young men should be taught these things, and I have told you why. As for Laches, if he has anything to say besides, I should gladly hear him.

'*Laches*. Of course, Nicias, it is hard to say of any exercise that it ought not to be learned, for it seems

good to know everything. Take this soldier business; if it is a study as its teachers say, and as Nicias says, one ought to study it. But if it is not a study and its supporters are cheats, or if it happens to be a study but not a very serious one, what can be the use of learning it? I say this about it, looking at this point: I think, if it were anything, it would not have escaped the Lacedæmonians, for whom nothing else is so much a care in life as seeking and providing that which, once learned and provided, may make them better than others in war. If it has escaped them — but this at least would not escape the teachers of it, that the Lacedæmonians, more than other Greeks, are eager for such things and that any one would be honored for it by them and make a lot of money besides, just as even a tragic poet is honored by us. So he who thinks he knows how to do a tragedy well, does not go outside, about Attica in a circle exhibiting to other cities, but comes straight here and exhibits, in all likelihood. But these fighters in armor, I see them holding Lacedæmonia to be holy, not to be trodden, not to be stepped on even with the tips of their toes, going round it in a circle and exhibiting to others rather and especially to those who would confess that many are before them in the art of war. Besides, Lysimachus, I have met not a few of those in this same business and see what sort they are. Indeed, we can judge the matter for ourselves,

for, as if aptly, none of these professors of soldiery has ever become a distinguished man in war. Yet in all other arts, those who have won a name are among those who profess them. These fellows, as it seems, compared with the others, have had very hard luck in this respect. Why, this Stesilaus, whom you saw with me in that great crowd, exhibiting and saying the great things about himself which he said, I saw on another occasion, truly making in earnest a more beautiful exhibition, and that against his will. Once, when the ship on which he was serving struck a tow, he was fighting with a grappling-hook, a weapon different from the usual as he himself was. Now the other things about the man aren't worth telling, but that novel device of a scythe fixed to a spear had this outcome: while he was fighting it caught in the rigging of the ship and stuck fast. So Stesilaus pulled, wishing to get it free, but couldn't. Ship was passing ship. For a while he ran along his ship holding on to the spear. When one ship drew away from the other and dragged him along holding the spear, he let it through his hands until he grasped the butt-end of the shaft. There was laughter and applause from aboard the tow at his figure, and when some one threw a stone on the deck near his feet and he let go the spear, those on board the trireme could no longer restrain their laughter, seeing that strange grappling-hook hanging

from the tow. Now, perhaps this business amounts to something, as Nicias says, but from what I have happened upon, it amounts to something like this. As I said in the beginning that which they say and pretend is a study, is either none or one of so little use that it's not worth the trouble to learn. Further, it seems to me that if a coward thought he knew it, becoming rasher on that account, he would make clearer than ever what sort he is. If a brave man, since he would be watched by others, he would incur great slander if he made even a little mistake. For the pretension to such knowledge is apt to cause jealousy, so that unless a man differs in a most remarkable degree from others in valor, he can hardly escape becoming a laughing-stock by saying he has this knowledge. That's what I think, Lysimachus, of the zeal for this study. But you should do as I said at first, don't let Socrates here go but get him to advise about the matter before us, how it looks to him.

'*Lysimachus.* Yes, I must, Socrates. For, as when combatants are separated, we seem to need a decision. Had the two agreed, there would have been less need of it. But now — since, as you see, Laches takes the opposite view to Nicias — you should be heard from also, with which of the two men you cast your vote.

'*Socrates.* What's this, Lysimachus, are you going to take what the majority of us praise?

'*Lysimachus*. But what can one do, Socrates?

'*Socrates*. And you, too, Melesias, are you going to do the same? If it were a matter of advice about a contest for your son, how he ought to train, would you obey the majority of us or that man, whoever he might be, who had been taught and trained by a good trainer in athletics?

'*Melesias*. The latter, probably, Socrates.

'*Socrates*. Would you obey him rather than four, us four?

'*Melesias*. Perhaps.

'*Socrates*. By knowledge, I think, a decision should be made and not by the majority, if there is to be a good decision.'

The search for that knowledge begins, but the knowledge is not found. All go home without it. They confess that they have never found it themselves, nor any teacher with the power to impart it. The two young men for whose good the advice of distinguished generals and of Athens' questioner was sought, are left without any immediate help. Their education is still an unsolved problem. It must wait, wait until their elders are first educated by the best teacher that can be found. This is the best advice that Socrates can give the parents. They may be laughed at for going to school again and with the boys. They should not

mind that, however. The matter is too important. Socrates will join them in the search for that teacher and the setting up of that school, the teacher and the school that have never existed. Lysimachus is eager to begin, but not now. For the present let the meeting break up. But to-morrow — Socrates must come early, at dawn. He promises to come to-morrow, God willing. We are not told whether God willed.

The 'Laches' may well be taken as a typical picture of Athens in the fourth century B.C. There is abundant evidence for it. Parents were anxious about the education of their children. They wanted a new school and there were many proposals for it. They were both clear and confused in their minds about what they wanted that school to do. It was clear to them that neither they themselves nor existing schools did for their children what they wanted most for them. This was education in character. The usual schools and the usual subjects taught did not seem to give it. Children were not made virtuous and better by them. Education ought to make them that. Indeed, education, after all, is simply nurturing children to grow better than they would if left to nature alone. What does it profit a boy to become a good flute-player, if at the same time he becomes worthless as a son or a friend or a citizen? Parents were quite clear in their minds that here was a distinction of first importance. Living re-

quires a diversity of specific skills. A man must play the flute, or sell bonds, or make shoes, or farm, or doctor, or preach, or write, or spend, or dance. It is proper that he should be trained accordingly. There is, however, another skill which a man should have, equally specific with the others, the skill to be good. For, again, there is a world of difference between being a good flute-player and being a good man. The latter is life's prize and education fails utterly if it does not lead children nearer to the winning of it. Parents were quite clear about this and were ready to listen to and pay any one who promised to give young people the kind of education desired. They looked for the morrow.

They were confused, however, about virtue, about that specific kind of human goodness they wanted for their children. It was plain enough so long as they were not forced to define it narrowly. Everybody knows what a good man is. As General Laches said on that point, you can tell him when you meet him. Does he cheat? Does he lie? Is he temperate, brave, wise, and just? Do others rely on him and seek him out? Is he called upon on important occasions? Is he mentioned for important offices and given important things to do? Is he heard of? Truthful answers to questions like these will reveal the qualities which define goodness. But all this is very well until you

come to education. Will you make a boy brave by sending him to war or wise by teaching him geometry? That's the old method. What, then, is virtue or goodness, what are temperance, wisdom, courage, justice, and the rest as things to be taught? Nature and the rough uses of experience may pound them in or out of a young man, or the gods may happily have endowed him with them at his birth. Most boys seem to get them the one way or the other. But parents would rather they did not get them in the first way, and, remembering themselves and their ancestors, they are not sure the boys will get them in the second. The school must take the place both of nature and of providence and provide the thing desired. But what, again, is that thing? Well, it isn't after all the business of parents to answer. They know what they want and they know that a school is a failure if it does not provide it. What the thing is, is the school's business. This means that the school must have trained and competent teachers. And this means that the teachers must have not so much knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but a good deal of knowledge about the human soul, its needs, its qualities, its growth. This is what Socrates is saying over and over again in the dialogues of Plato. He seems never to tire of it. He is always looking for the teacher of virtue who will give young men and parents what they want. He knows

that he is not that teacher himself. He may be able to help laboring thoughts to their birth, but he does not so know the human soul that by virtue of his knowledge he can tell what virtue is and implant it there to grow. But, surely, there must be such a teacher somewhere, sometime — to-morrow, God willing. If Socrates could only have done the thing himself or found the teacher, Athens might not have put him to death.

If he only could have done it, parents to-day might not still be seeking the same thing. 'There must be in the world,' says Bertrand Russell in his introduction to 'Education and the Good Life,' 'many parents who, like the present author, have young children whom they are anxious to educate as well as possible, but reluctant to expose to the evils of most existing educational institutions. The difficulties of such parents are not soluble by any effort on the part of isolated individuals. It is, of course, possible to bring up children at home by means of governesses and tutors, but this plan deprives them of the companionship which their nature craves, and without which some essential elements of education must be lacking. Moreover it is extremely bad for a boy or girl to feel "odd" and different from other boys and girls: this feeling, when traced to parents as its cause, is almost certain to rouse resentment against them, leading to a love of all that they most dislike. The conscientious parent may be driven

by these considerations to send his boys and girls to schools in which he sees grave defects, merely because no existing schools seem to him satisfactory — or, if any are satisfactory, they are not in his neighborhood. Thus the cause of educational reform is forced upon conscientious parents, not only for the good of the community, but also for the good of their own children. If the parents are well-to-do, it is not necessary to the solution of their private problem that *all* schools should be good, but only that there should be some good school geographically available. But for wage-earning parents nothing suffices except reform in the elementary schools. As one parent will object to the reforms which another parent desires, nothing will serve except an energetic educational propaganda, which is not likely to prove effective until long after the reformer's children are grown up. Thus from love for our own children we are driven, step by step, into the wider sphere of politics and philosophy.

'From this wider sphere I desire, in the following pages, to remain aloof as far as possible. The greater part of what I have to say will not be dependent upon the views that I may happen to hold as regards the major controversies of our age. But *complete* independence in this regard is impossible. The education we desire for our children must depend upon our ideals of human character, and our hopes as to the part they

are to play in the community. A pacifist will not desire for his children the education which seems good to a militarist; the educational outlook of a communist will not be the same as that of an individualist. To come to a more fundamental cleavage: there can be no agreement between those who regard education as a means of instilling certain definite beliefs and those who think that it should produce the power of independent judgment. Where such issues are relevant, it would be idle to shirk them. At the same time, there is a considerable body of new knowledge in psychology and pedagogy which is independent of these ultimate questions, and has an intimate bearing on education. Already it has produced very important results, but a great deal remains to be done before its teachings have been fully assimilated. This is especially true of the first five years of life; these have been found to have an importance far greater than that formerly attributed to them, which involves a corresponding increase in the educational importance of parents. My aim and purpose, wherever possible, will be to avoid controversial issues. Polemical writing is necessary in some spheres: but in addressing parents one may assume a sincere desire for the welfare of their offspring, and this alone, in conjunction with modern knowledge, suffices to decide a very large number of educational problems. What I have to say is the outcome of per-

plexities in regard to my own children; it is therefore not remote or theoretical, and may, I hope, clarify the thoughts of other parents faced with a like perplexity, whether in the way of agreement with my conclusion or the opposite. The opinions of parents are immensely important, because, for lack of expert knowledge, parents are too often a drag upon the best educationalists. If parents desire a good education for their children, there will, I am convinced, be no lack of teachers willing and able to give it.

'I propose, in what follows, to consider first the aims of education: the kind of individuals, and the kind of community, that we may reasonably hope to see produced by education applied to raw material of the present quality. I ignore the question of the improvement of the breed, whether by eugenics or by any other process, natural or artificial, since this is essentially outside the problems of education. But I attach great weight to modern psychological discoveries which tend to show that character is determined by early education to a much greater extent than was thought by the most enthusiastic educationists of former generations. I distinguish between education of character and education in knowledge, which may be called instruction in the strict sense. The distinction is useful, though not ultimate: some virtues are required in a pupil who is to become instructed, and much know-

ledge is required for the successful practice of many important virtues. For purposes of discussion, however, instruction can be kept apart from education of character. I shall deal first with education of character, because it is especially important in early years; but I shall carry it through to adolescence, and deal, under this head, with the important question of sex education. Finally, I shall discuss intellectual education, its aims, its curriculum, and its possibilities, from the first lessons in reading and writing to the end of the university years. The further education which men and women derive from life and the world I shall regard as lying outside my scope; but to make men and women capable of learning from experience should be one of the aims which early education should keep most prominently in view.' [1]

To make men and women capable of learning from experience — that is the main thing. But there are philosophers who say they never learn in any other way.

There was a morning when Socrates was wakened early, even before the dawn. One wonders if it was the day after he talked with Laches and if God was unwilling that he go again to Lysimachus. This time a young man, Hippocrates, called him. The youth was burst-

[1] From *Education and the Good Life*, by Bertrand Russell, published by Horace Liveright, Inc.

ing with news. Protagoras had come to Athens. Socrates had heard of it two days ago and was not surprised. He was surprised, however, and somewhat alarmed at the proposal Hippocrates had then to make. That eager young man would learn from Protagoras, the great teacher, and would have Socrates help him get enrolled as a pupil. He was ready to spend his own and his friends' money, so eager was he for the best education the day afforded. Socrates, however, was cautious. He would test the young man by a few questions to find out if he really knew what he was about. When you buy food for your body in the market, you can test it and find out before you eat it whether it will help or hurt your body; but when you buy food for your soul, you cannot do this, for in this case, testing is eating, and you never know until afterwards whether it helps or hurts your soul. This going to Protagoras is a serious business, so serious that there should first be a family council about it, with the elder members particularly, for it is hardly a matter for the young to decide. Hippocrates wavers, but Socrates concludes, 'However, as we have started, let us go.'

They go. They find Protagoras at a rich man's house with other rival teachers. Although it is still quite early, a goodly number of people have already come to meet and hear the distinguished foreigners. For foreigners have come to Athens to enlighten it.

There was a mixture of order and confusion. Unused rooms had been cleared out for better accommodation and there was the sound of loud talking from one of them where Prodicus was conversing about something. A group near the door was listening to Hippias on astronomy. Protagoras, himself, was marching up and down the main room followed by a throng of attentive listeners which gracefully parted at each turn of the great man to form anew behind him. After a little delay Socrates ventures: 'Protagoras, Hippocrates and I have come to you.' The great man pauses, asking if the request is for a private conference. Socrates says that he will let Protagoras decide that, for he has come simply to introduce Hippocrates, a native of Athens and son of a fortunate house, who wants to be taught, only Socrates would like to know what it is that Protagoras will teach him. They do not go into privacy. Protagoras does not prefer it. Unlike some others, he would have everything fair and open. He promises to make Hippocrates daily better by teaching him virtue, meaning by virtue that which makes a man a good citizen. Socrates questions whether this can be taught. If it is teachable, why do the Athenians neglect the teaching of it? They are reputed to be a shrewd people. When they undertake public works, such as buildings or a fleet, they seek the advice of expert craftsmen who have been competently trained, but when they con-

sider the city's management, they listen to smiths, shoemakers, business men, sailors, rich, poor, well-born and base-born, without ever asking whether such men have been competently trained. It looks as if the Athenians believed that no man needs special training to be a good citizen and that, in this matter, one man was as good as another. The same is true of their private affairs. Parents have their children taught everything but virtue, as is clear from the fact that distinguished fathers like Pericles have undistinguished sons in spite of the best schooling. Surely, virtue would be taught, if it could be; it is so important. That it is not taught is proof that it is unteachable.

Pythagoras has a different interpretation to give to Athenian practice. The freedom allowed all citizens without prejudice, to speak and advise in public assemblies is not evidence of a belief that virtue cannot be taught. It is evidence rather of the belief that politics is public business and all citizens should share in it. There is a story that, after all that Epimetheus (Afterthought) and Prometheus (Forethought) did for men, men were left to shift for themselves, each by his own, unaided, individual efforts. Men were, consequently, in a bad way, in danger of perishing. So Zeus sent Hermes to give them the sense of shame and justice in order that they might have cities and the bonds of friendship, and he advised Hermes not to give all to

some, but some to all, for only so could cities prosper. This story illustrates the practice of the Athenians. They certainly believe that justice can be taught, for they are constantly teaching one another by mutual exhortations and by rewarding the good and punishing the bad. Parents do the same with their children, constantly admonishing them from childhood to walk in the right way, even punishing them severely when they stray from it. And it is no more surprising that good parents have bad children than that good flute-players do not have good flute-players for offspring. So, much can be done to make men good and teach virtue to the young. Protagoras has made this his special concern and has been successful. So sure is he of his prowess that he is willing to arbitrate the matter of fees if any pupil is dissatisfied with the amount usually asked.

Protagoras takes some time and some eloquence to say all this. He makes Socrates waver and shift his ground. Let us suppose then that virtue can be taught, but what is virtue? The ready answer of Protagoras has the usual consequences of the ready answer picked to pieces by the questions of Socrates. There is much quibbling and much distortion of words. There are orations, even a long one by Socrates who declares he can't make one. There is delight and applause from the audience. There is heat, so much of it that the two philosophers are on the point of quit-

ting in anger, but patch up their quarrel under the persuasion of the listening group. The outcome of it all is little more than the fun the spectators had. Socrates is driven to the position that virtue is knowledge and can therefore be taught, while Protagoras is driven to admit that virtue is not knowledge and therefore cannot be taught. At the end each has embraced the initial opinion of the other. Neither has had the better of it. Neither had shown himself superior to the other in any respect. At the end both are cordial, compliment each other, and agree to go at it again some other time. Just now, both have other engagements.

But what has become of Hippocrates? Socrates and Protagoras and everybody else have forgotten him. The reader has forgotten him. He got up very early in the morning to get an education, but nobody knows whatever became of him.

Can virtue, then, be taught? Can education make a man good? The question is asked again and again in Plato's pages, but never receives a straightforward, unequivocal answer. It is left a question, the insistent human question as we make our way through the changes and chances of this mortal life. Meno puts it squarely in his conversation with Socrates: 'Can you tell me, Socrates, if virtue is teachable? If not teachable, is it a matter of discipline? If neither a matter of discipline nor learned, is it acquired by men as they

grow, or in some other way?' Socrates confesses at once that he knows nothing whatever about the matter and has never met a man that does. He is willing, however, to talk about it with Meno. They talk, and the result is a demonstration of their confusion. They are as ignorant at the end as they were in the beginning. They cannot tell what virtue is and cannot, therefore, answer the questions asked. They admit, however, that, whatever it is, it is adventitious. It comes to men. It does not, as yet, come by teaching, for although there are professed teachers of it, neither parents nor professors succeed. It does not come by discipline, for the same discipline produces contrary results. It does not come to men as they grow, for some grow virtuous and others vicious. How, then, does it come? Let us say by divine favor. It is a gift which the gods occasionally bestow. For do not all men praise virtue, exact it, call it divine, look upon it as something rare and exceptional, something alien to our nature, but akin to divinity? 'Even the women, Meno, call good men divine, and the Spartans, when they praise a good man, say, "This man is divine."' Virtue comes, but it comes by grace. We must wait for it.

It is instructive to wait with Meno and Socrates. The former wants his question answered, but the latter keeps insisting that we must first seek out what virtue

is. Meno gets tired of the search. He recalls a current argument that it is useless to search for what you know and equally useless to search for that of which you are wholly ignorant. Socrates appeals to the soul. It is undying, but born many times and has in these changes seen and known all things in heaven and earth, but its knowledge is obscured or forgotten and needs to be recalled to mind. For learning is only remembering. Our searchings are the proddings of our memories. We should take heart, therefore, and continue. Meno is unconvinced and asks for proof. His slave is standing near, knowing how to speak Greek, but knowing nothing about geometry. Socrates questions the boy and begs Meno to observe carefully whether the boy is learning from Socrates or only remembering. And the unlearned slave discovers the solution of the problem of doubling the square. It was an impressive performance, one which has caught the imagination of many readers and been taken neatly to illustrate Plato's doctrine of knowledge. 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.' Yet a reader may well ask why a problem in geometry was solved instead of the quest for virtue ended. The situation demanded that virtue be found. Why did Socrates not dig it out of the boy's soul instead of a square twice as big as another? The problem in geometry had been solved again and again. Both Socrates and Meno knew the solution.

But they did not know what virtue is. They had prodded their own memories in vain. What a demonstration it would have been to reveal it by prodding the memory of a slave! Others than Plato have done it.

The demonstration seems to have astonished Meno a little, but not to have wholly convinced him. Socrates would resume the quest for virtue, but Meno declined. Apparently the solution of geometrical problems was of no help. He returns to his original question. Can virtue be taught? Socrates consents to attack it, abandoning the greater quest, but would proceed hypothetically as geometricians do when they are not very sure of what they are talking about. Let us suppose that virtue belongs to the class of teachable things. Then, if it is teachable, it must be knowledge, for what is teachable is always knowledge. But if it is knowledge and, therefore, teachable, there should be teachers of it. But there are no teachers of it. Therefore, it is not knowledge and is not teachable. The argument is not impressive, but the illustrations of it are. Socrates appeals to human experience, to the widespread interest in education, to the efforts parents make in behalf of their children, to the money they spend, paying it even to gross impostors — and all without effect. There are the sons of Pericles, for example. Could sons be more favorably situated for getting the best that life can give? But look at them! They were both found in

the company with Protagoras when Socrates took Hippocrates to be introduced to that great master. You can teach Meno's slave geometry, but you cannot teach the sons of Pericles virtue. Socrates does not say that in words, but the 'Meno' says it in effect and says it more clearly than it says anything else. Geometry can be taught under the most unfavorable conditions, but virtue cannot be taught under the most favorable. That is Platonic doctrine. We see the boys of Lysimachus and Melesias waiting while their parents, two generals, and Socrates get educated; we see Hippocrates rushing off at dawn to Protagoras to be forgotten; we see the sons of Pericles, corrupted in spite of every advantage; and we see Meno's slave solving a geometrical problem in five minutes. Would Plato have us believe that this is what education is?

We read the 'Laches,' the 'Protagoras,' the 'Meno,' and other comments of Plato on education[1] and may ask what we have learned. Perhaps, however, the question is ill-advised. Perhaps Plato expects the reader not to learn, but to see, or to learn only after

[1] The man who wrote the *Republic* and the other dialogues mentioned here may have written the *Laws* also. I am forced to doubt it in spite of the evidence. Obviously my doubts are no sounder than the convictions of others in this matter. Yet I feel very confident that if Plato wrote them all, he had radically changed in intellectual temper when he wrote the *Laws*. That work is conceived in a different spirit and is inferior in style and intellectual penetration. I am convinced that if Plato's name were not attached to it, it would enjoy little reputation. It is a poor thing when compared with the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*.

he has seen. What is education and what is virtue? The fact is that everybody seems to know. There seems to be no need of a demonstration to show that every life, that of man, woman, or child, of ruler or ruled, of statesman or flute-player, of doctor or carpenter, of free man or slave, should have a quality which commends it irrespective of all distinctions of age, sex, and occupation. That quality is virtue, a certain harmony of character which guarantees the finding, in its possessor, of a man indeed. The quality may be conceived nobly or ignobly, sanely or sentimentally, conventionally or unconventionally. The great matter is its possession — even among thieves with their honor. It is the one thing without which no life, no matter how fortunate and successful it may be in other respects, can be wholly satisfactory and with which almost any life is lifted high. It gives the supreme distinction to a man, enhancing all his natural or acquired gifts and powers. It makes of him a personality, a soul as distinct from a body, and lets him live mindful of the things that do not perish in spite of the many births and deaths of human bodies. So all men really want it, down in the bottom of their hearts. They want it for themselves: they expect it of others. And most of all, they want it for their children. New lives, as yet unsoiled by what the old remember, suggest possibilities and splendors. Symbols of hope, they give

promise of the better day. They are the future, bidding the dead past bury its dead. Yes; everybody knows what virtue is — knows that it is the force which transforms a body into a soul. Like Laches we may not be able to define it nicely, but we think we can tell it when we see it. And our saddest moments are those when we have relied on its presence, but found it was far away.

That is one of the things which Plato would have his readers see. He is a realist through and through. Socrates seeks and seeks. He does not find what he seeks. But he finds other seekers — the ambitious, the misguided, the deluded, the visionary, the mercenary, the weak, the confident, the boastful. He alone is disillusioned. In the light of that disillusionment the others are seen to be what they are, seekers of something which, if they have it, they do not have because they have sought it. They have it by divine favor. On that same disillusionment, Socrates builds the doctrine that no man willingly does wrong. It has the look of a strange doctrine which human experience hardly seems to justify. Some men appear to glory in evil which they willingly and knowingly do. Others claim that they are carried about against their wills by passions, temptations, and allurements; they are beside themselves when they sin. To all this Socrates replies: evil is, admittedly, an injury to the soul and no man

willingly injures his soul. The reply may not produce conviction, but Socrates found it difficult to win from those he questioned the admission that they themselves were really guilty of that injury. Some were ready enough to admit that their souls had been hurt by their own deeds and those of others. They were not ready to admit, however, that their own deeds were done with that intent, although the deeds of others may have been malicious. Driven to face that admission squarely, they refused, confessing the moral egotism that lies in the breast of every child of Adam. This is what the doctrine of Socrates exposes. The egotism is not condemned. It is exposed as a fact. It is made to illuminate human conduct. It reveals men working for their own good no matter how strange that working may look at times. Moral egotism may make a man believe that he knows what is best for himself and for others also. He is fortunate and divinely favored if he does, and, acting on that knowledge, becomes a benefactor of his kind. It may humble him to confess that such knowledge is not his and yet fortify him in the conviction that he does the best he can under the circumstances. Whatever effects similar to these it may have on individuals, it has one common effect — it generates the need of knowledge. For man lives in a precarious world. He must take thought to live well. He does not willingly do wrong, so, if he does

wrong as he so often does, the reason lies in his ignorance. He has not had full command of the situation. He has not been far-sighted enough or he has not had time to take into consideration all that should be taken into consideration. He wanted to act or had to act. He might have prepared himself better or been better prepared by others. A man may make a pair of shoes badly or play the flute badly without either wanting or being willing to do so. He can be taught to do both better. May he not be taught also to live better? If his moral egotism prevents him from doing wrong willingly and convinces him that he does the best he can under the circumstances, would not the proper education help him? Surely there must be those to whom he might go for advice and direction, some one who knows the soul, a psychologist, if you will. Not ourselves, but our education is responsible for what we are. Let us reform it. But you can teach Meno's slave geometry; you cannot teach the sons of Pericles virtue. Moral egotism begets the faith in education. Everybody believes in it — Catholics and Protestants, individualists and socialists, capitalists and communists, despots and anarchists, conservatives and radicals. And we all look for the new school while Meno's slave and the sons of Pericles look on.

This also Plato would have his readers see before they ask what they have learned. Is there anything

to learn from the spectacle? Or is the son of Apollo letting the god in him smile at the man in him, inviting our divinity to smile with him at our humanity? It is difficult to decide with confidence. Yet it is clear that the 'Laches,' the 'Protagoras,' and the 'Meno' are, first of all, dramatic scenes. If they are regarded as contributions to the theory or practice of education or to a theory of ethics, they do not themselves disclose what that contribution is. The reader is left precisely in the same predicament as the characters in the dialogues are left. Nothing is settled either for him or for them. The things they both want settled are postponed and cannot be settled until something else is done which they have not been able to do. This something has never yet been done and the dialogues give no assurance that it ever will be done. Their inconclusiveness is evidently deliberate and intended. Yet the reader gets an impression of something quite different from futility. He has been shown that virtue cannot be defined and that faith in education is vain, but it is not likely that he will accept either demonstration. He is very far from being convinced. Like Socrates, he is inclined to think that on another occasion, under better circumstances, with more knowledge and study, he could do much better. He is a little amused and a little impatient at waiting for divine favor. Grace may have a charming sound, but it is hollow as the final word in

the solution of social problems. Why not, then, take this natural effect on the reader as the intended effect of the dialogues? They are not treatises on education. They are the dramatic rendering of a human interest and a human faith. They present, in spite of their local limitations, faithful pictures of the situation in which we still find ourselves. A Socrates may rarely go about among us, but when he does, we see the man fighting in armor, the new school, Lysimachus, Melesias, with their boys, Laches, Nisias, Hippocrates, Protagoras, Meno, the slave, and the sons of Pericles. There is the expectation of grace. Our men in armor and our Protagorases need not be named. Would Socrates find them enjoying, in addition to the applause and fees of men, the favor of the gods? And if he did not, would the moneys spent on education be much diminished or interest in it flag? It is the drama of education that is found in Plato.

The drama may be as instructive as a treatise. Why has not virtue been long ago defined? Why has not education long ago removed our social ills? It is easy to answer that we do not know sufficiently the nature of the human soul, that the psychologists have not been given enough control, or that God's grace has not descended amply enough. It is either our temporary ignorance or our natural depravity which is to blame. Let it be so. But the drama makes it sun-clear that

there is something at once comic and tragic in the expectation that we can find teachers who are neither ignorant nor naturally depraved. Parents are notoriously bad educators of their children and the sons of psychologists seem to be no better off than the sons of Pericles. Parents, therefore, should not be educators, at least they should not be educators of their own children. Send the children to school! Let them be educated by the childless or by the parents of other children! Get them out of the home and into an institution! Humble the family and exalt the state! This is precisely what Plato recommends in the 'Republic.' And this is precisely what we keep on recommending. But the school asks for children better trained at home and the home asks for children better trained at school. Hippocrates, that boy of the new day, is either forgotten or experimented upon while parents and teachers' associations debate. They discover that it is parents, and not children that need education. Perhaps it is the children who do the educating after all. If only we, who were once children, could understand them! The hope of education lies in understanding the child and in training him accordingly.

It may be that none will find instruction in Plato's ironical exhibition of the mixture of comedy and tragedy in the human drama of education. Yet it seems clear that Plato, and Greek philosophy generally,

thought that there was something salutary simply in seeing things as they are. The spectacle of life fascinates. Caught in the turmoil of affairs we do not see it clearly, for our eyes are fixed on other things, our business, our wealth, our occupations, our reputation. These give us a bias and a preoccupation which prevents our seeing the spectacle we make of ourselves. But in moments of leisure we flock to the theater or read stories of love, passion, intrigue, and adventure. These, and not our experience, tell us what life really is, for they transform us from participants in action to spectators of it. This justifies our presence in the theater. Surrounded by strangers and intimates we do not blush to look at scenes in which we would never willingly be found in action, or hear words we would never willingly be overheard using. We have the happiness of detachment. We may laugh or cry without having anything whatever at stake and without the moral obligation to interfere with what is going on. We see life without living it. Like disembodied souls we enjoy the essences of joy and sorrow, love and hate, life and death, laughter and tears, without the consequences they have in a society of bodies. Art, not business or work or morals or religion or science or philanthropy, reveals what life is and reveals it to be viewed in freedom. By it we escape from living. From it we may get pleasure and illumination. If we get the

former only, the trouble is either with the art or with ourselves. If we get the latter, then we know better what we are doing when we meddle to make men better. So if we asked Plato to tell us the reason why education has not been more successful, he might only give us another dialogue, but he might also, as man to man, say that it was neither our ignorance nor our depravity, but rather our failure to see what education is. With that vision we may not educate the better, but we shall at least know what we are doing.

If we cannot teach virtue, we may teach geometry. Inability to do the one is no excuse for not doing the other or for doing it badly. Plato seems to have been fond of geometry and to have recommended it highly. There is an incredible but illustrative story that he made it an entrance requirement to the Academy. The story is true of colleges of to-day. In spite of the fact that knowing that the square on the diagonal is twice the square on the side does not improve a child's manners or morals, our schools generally, and some parents, have persisted in the belief that a child who cannot master that piece of knowledge has not the best of prospects for the future. He is looked upon with some suspicion and is a cause of some anxiety. Capacity for virtue in him is not as well-assured as one could wish. His inability seems to imply a defect somewhere in his soul. He has failed in a test of intel-

ligence. He may be a good child and turn out to be a good man in spite of it, but it is a little remarkable that he should. There are vast realms of knowledge from which he is excluded and these realms happen to be of considerable importance for the business, comforts, and conveniences of life. The intellectually defective may, none the less, get through life with a fair or even a remarkable showing, but there is always the danger of intellectual and moral crookedness in them. Thoughtless people may not be bad. It is something of a miracle, however, if they are good, a miracle of grace which has blest them with a lovable nature or a generous disposition. It may be no less a miracle when the thoughtful are good. Geometry is not a guarantee of virtue. There are many mathematicians who are not virtuous, who are notoriously queer and unsociable, and who have the wildest fancies. Yet society keeps on putting its faith in men who do not double squares by doubling their sides. So much in life depends on finding diagonals, that the highest rewards await the men who can find them. So we stick to teaching geometry. Slaves look less like slaves when they can master it and the sons of Pericles are certainly not doing mischief when they study it.

Geometry is not the only thing that can be taught nor the only thing that Plato recommends. It is, however, the study which in many ways best illustrates

his recommendations — those recommendations which his dramatizing of education seems to disclose. For geometry is the high road to the certain and the inevitable. It forbids differences of opinion. It may let a man start as he likes and give him, like the souls in Er's story, a free choice to begin with, but after that he is in the hands of fate, compelled possibly to eat his own children. Like Thomas Hobbes, studying geometry at the age of forty, he may exclaim, 'By God! it's impossible,' only to yield to conviction in the end. Plato seems to think that experiences of that sort are good for both man and child. He would not have teachers ask: What is *your* opinion? What do *you* think? How does it impress *you*? How does it *seem* to *you*? Socrates, indeed, goes about asking just such questions, but he asks them to expose ignorance, not to discover knowledge, and he claims again and again that he is no teacher. He was charged with corrupting the young and put to death as a consequence. History, shocked at the injustice of it, has pronounced him blameless and accounted him one of the greatest benefactors of mankind. It is clear, however, that Plato does not recommend the Socratic method for any other purpose than that for which Socrates used it. He exposes our ignorance that we may flee to geometry and studies like it. When Socrates does teach, he leaves the sons of Pericles with Protagoras and talks to Meno's slave

about a square. He is everlastingly trying to get men, old and young, out of the realm of *their* opinions and into the realm of fixed and certain knowledge. His abomination is the doctrine that everything flows, nothing abides. Men must be made conscious, even if he must drink hemlock, that *their* opinions may be of very little consequence in a world in which they are born without their consent and out of which they go against their will. They are in God's hands, not their own, and their one hope of salvation lies in finding out how God's hands work, not in boasting of the work of their own. In spite of poets, who so often do him grave injustice, God is not an opinionated person who at one time thinks he knows and at another changes his mind. He is rather like geometry which lets you start as you will and overtakes you in the end. Play the flute and debate with Protagoras; get angry with him even and change your mind and his about virtue; but be sure all the time that you can tell what is the double of a square. Perhaps the forgotten Hippocrates learned something after all and went home to study geometry. Did he thereby become a slave or put himself in the way of God's grace?

The distinction between debatable and undebatable subjects — between opinion and knowledge — abounds in the dialogues of Plato. It is epitomized in the distinction between virtue and geometry. Virtue

cannot be taught because it is debatable, while geometry can, just because it is not debatable. From the contrast emerges a principle: the teachability of subjects varies with their debatable character. And the principle furnishes some guidance for the ordering of a young man's studies. He should proceed from the undebatable to the debatable, from the realm of knowledge to the realm of opinion. He should not proceed conversely. This latter way may, doubtless, be more exciting, more stimulating, and more spectacular, for the young alone are precocious and can be pushed with little effort to express with confidence opinions which astonish their elders. Their parents, anxious about their education and hopeful for their future, are readily impressed by any evidence of precociousness and would gladly see in it proof of the presence of genius. There is, besides, something eloquent and arresting in the spectacle of a young man of twenty having settled so soon questions which his parents, at the end of their lives, find have never been settled to their own satisfaction. Yet the admiration dims a little when youth begins to instruct age, finds fault with its convictions and prejudices, demands to take the realm of opinion in its own hands, and justifies the demand by what has gone on in the school. Nature, thinks Plato, has provided enough healthy opposition between youth and age to make us cautious

of increasing it by education. He seriously questions whether the young have any right to opinions about the unsettled before they have reasonably mastered the settled. His reason is profound. It is not that he would keep things forever as they are, for he put the perfect city in the sky where it need never change and let Ulysses make the choice we are to remember. He was a revolutionist, a man of novel ideas, and Socrates was put to death. Clearly his recommendation is not that of the stand-patter. His reason is that disinterested discipline may give a man balance, while interested discipline most assuredly will not. He knew well enough that opinions early formed are the hardest to outgrow, and when outgrown often leave a man without chart or compass, while those later formed are far more susceptible to change and adjustment. In spite of the protests of youth, it is age and experience which are liberal. It is age and experience that hesitate to cramp and confine and to close the door of opportunity, for, otherwise, youth would not be allowed to be what it is. It is not young men who do justice, but old men, even rich old men like Cephalus, who do it and do it without troubling themselves very much about what it is. So Plato would keep the young out of the realm of the debatable until they had matured a little in the realm of the undebatable. Then he would let them into the former, trusting the grace of God to do the rest.

It is, thus, disinterested schooling which Plato puts first, the study of those subjects in which personal opinions do not count. He would have children play and dance and sing and even go to church, for such exercises he thought cultivate their bodies, their sociability, and their sense of reverence. But he would have them taught very little about God or virtue. He would not let them think that such matters were in their province to decide, but he would cultivate in them the habit of making decisions. That was one reason why he found geometry useful. Meno's slave thought at first that the doubled square would have a side double that of the original, but was led to discover his mistake and discover it beyond the shadow of a doubt. He found that his opinion was rectified by finding that his opinion did not count. Simply by following the lead of the square itself he came to the right decision and that decision held whether he were slave or free, young or old, virtuous or vicious. It was a disinterested decision, the kind of decision which the young should be encouraged to make as a preparation for making decisions which are not disinterested. They may think, or they may be told by some sophist, that solving problems in mathematics or in science, in language, in history, or in economics, which have long since been solved over and over again and which involve no living issues of the current world, is a bore,

a waste of time, and a poor preparation for life. Plato, however, advises us to keep on. He believes that such a discipline is the best possible anticipation of the hard knocks which experience will surely bring later. For as the habit of being led by what one studies to disinterested decisions grows, the soul grows more and more immune to vanity, to self-deception, and to despair. It becomes catholic, liberal, and generous. A soul may not be taught virtue, but it may be prepared for it through habits of disinterestedness.

The preparation may have no fruit in virtue, but the auspices are in its favor. Having been taught subjects which can be taught and which are not matters of personal opinion and private judgment, a young man may be led to wonder at himself and at the world he inhabits. He may be led to view even himself with detachment and so get quite a different picture of what he is than he is apt to get when he is occupied with love or business or war. Then he discovers how little he differs essentially from the characters he sees in plays in the theater. Art may exaggerate them, making them appear better or worse than men naturally are, but it imitates nature none the less, and by exciting either laughter or tears, reveals our essential humanity behind the exaggeration. There is, after all, nothing really important for a man besides laughter and tears. The gods, like the makers of plays, have

arranged everything else admirably. If we never smiled, nor wept — in those rare moments when laughter and tears are forgotten, nothing is found in nature to be in need of change.

> 'All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
> The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
> And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
> Till life's mechanics can no further go.'

And death's mechanics are no less perfect. All is arranged and so nicely arranged that whatever happens can be understood simply in terms of its happening. It is as if a mind arranged it all; as if a soul, forgetting laughter and tears, could learn it all and teach it all. Indeed, it might remember laughter and tears, and if it kept aloof from them itself, it might discover that they too were nicely arranged. All this, man has never yet discovered. Yet in his rare moments of detachment when he knows that he is disinterested, he is profoundly conscious that no other sort of a discovery would satisfy him. He is driven to the conclusion that in spite of all his ignorance, nature is precisely the sort of thing he attempts to discover it to be. Yet he laughs or cries as if his soul's destiny depended on the outcome of his laughter or his tears. He is fated to eat his own children, yet he cries about it, beats his breast, and blames the fate which in his undisturbed moments he believes is the one thing, above all other, to be dis-

covered. Granted a glimpse of the vision which God has of the world, he none the less worries about it, a thing which God never does. He asks, What is justice, what is virtue, can they be taught? He would teach them, not only to his children, but to God himself. He would teach God a lesson by sending children to school.

Plato seems to think that a man should see all this before he can become genuinely virtuous himself or ought to attempt to teach virtue to others. Only so can he truly know himself and be the psychologist who knows the human soul. It is easy enough to make a world. Prometheus and Epimetheus, as in Pythagoras' story, were competent enough. All that is needed is plenty of forethought and afterthought. But to make a virtuous world, a world where laughter and tears not only *are*, but are life's significance, is quite a different matter. This must be a world in which choosing a world is of more consequence than the world chosen. For this the mechanics of life and death do not and cannot provide, for they are found only in the chosen world, not in the choice of it. The choice requires virtue — justice, temperance, courage, and wisdom. Happy is the man who has them when he needs them! But man is never sure that he has them. He is always asking and trying to find out what they are. He thinks quite confidently and there seems to

be good evidence of his confidence, that he can tell a just act when he sees it, or a temperate, courageous, or wise one, but what these adjectives are when turned into nouns and made names for powers in the soul which give these acts their qualities, whether they are four powers or one, whether they are parts of virtue or the whole of it, and, if parts, how the whole differs from its parts, and if not parts, how together they make a whole, whether justice is temperate or courage wise, or wisdom just, or temperance courageous — all this is very baffling and very perplexing. And yet, strange to say, Plato seems to think that to be thus baffled and perplexed, provided one is genuinely so, is to have within one the grace of God, to be blest by divine favor. It seems difficult for him to tell why this is so. He has the habit of telling a story instead, which sends a man home thinking and wondering, some wholly unbelievable story which in spite of that seems truer than anything that ever happened. He seems to make belief a matter of 'making believe.' Yet he talks at times very impressively about 'dialectic' as a valuable exercise for the soul. Virtue cannot be taught because it is not knowledge or it can be taught because it is knowledge. Let the alternative be 'thoroughly talked out.' Let the soul converse with itself or with others about it, asking and answering questions, saying 'yes' and 'no.' Thus a kind of ladder is built on which

the soul climbs into a rarer but clearer atmosphere. It grows conscious of the climbing and that the climbing is carrying it ever nearer a more congenial home. The body, with life's mechanics and death's, seems more and more like an accidental thing or the temporary house of splendors too large for it to hold. True splendor is above, shining and dazzling. The soul looks and blinks, but looks again. It turns away half-ashamed, like a lover looking for another look and trembling. If it could see clearly, it would see virtue — justice, temperance, courage, wisdom — not as an object of study and worry, but as a beauty to be loved. Then the soul becomes really divine and godlike. If it were divine only, it might laugh at or despise or pity the race of men. Since it is human also and is familiar with the adventures of Ulysses, it loves men and sees that their loving, which so often destroys them, is the only thing that can save them. They love so ridiculously, when it is a bright penny or a bright face, but the dialectical soul has discovered that what they really love is that which makes face and penny bright. There is more there than copper or flesh. For Plato, only such a soul is educated. It may reluctantly be willing to become a lawgiver or a teacher. It would so make laws and so teach that men may have the opportunity to know themselves and to discriminate what they love.

One may suspect that Plato would have the reader learn something like this from his dramatic rendering of education. It is, however, asking the reader to become himself a dramatist first, viewing life with ironic and disinterested detachment. He must be able to laugh at himself before he takes himself seriously. And he must never take himself too seriously. Certainly he must not take himself so seriously as to suppose that dialectic which may save his soul, is the proper method for governing a state or educating the young. Let him rather stick to geometry and be cautious about becoming in a hurry the vehicle of God's grace. Men are altogether too prone to wait for the favor of the gods, to go to church for it or to buy it of Pythagoras, and to let geometry go unstudied and untaught. Then their greatest calamity befalls them. They become ignorant of the kind of world in which they live and of the nature of their own bodies. They have no sense of fate, the sense that they had nothing to do with the way the world was made. That was attended to long ago without their concern or coöperation. They had better find that out first and how it was attended to. Then they can know and teach what is to be expected from the operations of nature. They can govern their cities accordingly. They will look for miracles, no doubt, but when they have ceased to expect them from nature or education or government,

they may look for them where they are possible — in their own souls. No miracle seems ever to happen there until the search for it elsewhere is abandoned.

V

LOVE

THERE are many lovers in Plato's dialogues and much talk about love, but hardly a hint of an amorous romance. Love is not depicted as the way of a man with a maid, one of the several things in the world which the Proverbs of Solomon tell us are hard to understand. We are to try initially to understand something which is much harder, the way of men with men and the way of a man with a boy. Maids are excluded. There is a woman, Diotima, but she is wise and evidently old, suited to give instruction, but apparently not suited to give anything else. Socrates may sit admiringly at her feet while she talks of love, and experience no desire to take her in his arms. He is enflamed, however, by the sight of Charmides, a youth. This incident is instructive. It affords a hint how, with Plato, love, wherever found, even in its sordid and per-

verted forms, may yet be charmed, if only the proper words are found in which to pronounce the spell which turns love's fire into light. We go from passion to vision and are asked at last to *see* love, the one thing that Socrates, with all his confessed ignorance of other things, repeatedly professes to know. The 'Charmides' gives a hint of this. Socrates has returned to Athens from the army at Potidæa, where there has recently been a sharp engagement, and surprises his friends at a palæstra, a sort of athletic club where wrestling is taught and practiced. They are eager for news of the battle. He gives it and asks in turn for news of the city: 'Philosophy, how fares it? The young men, who of them are distinguished for wisdom or beauty or for both?' He is answered with words and a demonstration. Through a door comes a throng of young men who, he is told, are the forerunners and lovers of Charmides, the idol of them all. The youth himself enters followed by another throng equally under the spell of his charms. Socrates, accustomed to see beauty in the young, is impressed, catching the contagious admiration from old and young alike. Chærophon asks: 'How does the young man strike you, Socrates? A beautiful face?' 'Beyond nature,' is the reply. 'But if he should strip you would not think of his face, so wholly beautiful is his figure.' They all agree. Then Socrates· 'By Hercules, how irresistible a man you

speak of, if only he has one small thing in addition.' 'What?' 'The soul.' They assure him about the soul. Why not, then, strip Charmides to the soul and look at that rather than his figure? The suggestion is welcomed by Critias, the uncle of Charmides, for there are those who think the young man a philosopher and much of a poet. So Charmides is bidden to step forward to meet Socrates, who, at the suggestion of Critias, is to pose as a physician able to cure the young man's head. For Charmides has, of late, found his head heavy on rising in the morning.

Socrates is telling the story: 'He came and caused much laughter; for we who were seated began, each to shove his neighbor in eagerness to make a place for him to sit next, until at the ends of the row we made one stand up and the other fall off sideways. But he came and sat between me and Critias. But then, my friend, I was now at a loss and the former boldness I had that I could easily talk with him, was knocked out of me. When Critias said it was I who knew the cure, he looked at me with eyes somehow most extraordinary and made ready as if to question me; then all who were in the palæstra gathered around us together in a circle and I, my noble friend, saw under his cloak and took fire, was beside myself and thought how wise Kydias was in matters of love when, speaking of a beautiful boy, he said, advising another, "Take care

lest the lamb coming in sight of the lion be caught as a piece of meat." For I seemed myself to be seized by some such wildness. Though he asked me if I knew the cure for his head, I could somehow hardly reply that I did. "What is it, then?" he asked. I said that it was a certain leaf, but there was a certain charm for the cure; if one repeated the charm at the same time one used the leaf, the cure would make one wholly well; but without the charm, there was no good in the leaf. "I will write the charm down now if you'll tell me," he said. "Whether you pay me or not?" I asked. "If I pay you, Socrates," he replied, laughing. "Well," I said, "are you so sure of my name?" "If I'm not in the wrong," he said, "for there is not a little talk of you among my associates, and I remember you, in my childhood, being with Critias here." "You do well," said I, "so I can speak to you more freely about the charm, of what sort it happens to be. Just now I was in doubt how I should show you its power. For it is, Charmides, of such a sort that it cannot make the head well alone."'

Then follows a curious and somewhat perplexing sequel. The head — that beautiful head with the strange eyes — cannot be cured without first curing the body; and the body — that body which inflamed Socrates — cannot be cured without first curing the soul. And the soul — there, there is need of the spell.

So to cure the head of Charmides, the beautiful, Socrates must find his soul and cast a spell upon it; this first, and then, possibly the leaf for the head. Although Charmides was reputed a philosopher and much of a poet, there proved to be little to his soul on examination, even with his uncle Critias to help him out. The leaf was not used. Perhaps it was forgotten. We are not told. We are left with the impression that the spell must be repeated and with the hope, if we have really become interested in the young man, that his head was subsequently cured. The spell of Socrates was woven of words, for, as he says, it is beautiful words that charm the soul. And the beautiful word he uses to bewitch other words is *sophrosyne* (σωφροσύνη). We may translate it sobriety, moderation, discretion, temperance, sagacity, wisdom, self-mastery, modesty, chastity. It suggested synonyms in the Greek. The thing it stood for was prized, for he who possessed that thing could be sure, and give others the assurance, that his mind was sound and himself safe except for the tricks of fortune. His friends are sure that Charmides has it. He himself says it would be improper for him either to affirm or to deny its possession. Asked what it is, he shrinks at first and is unwilling to reply. Then he takes refuge in synonyms and turns the last of them over to Critias for support. Socrates does not want synonyms. He wants the thing. Other words for it

leave out something which robs *sophrosyne* of the high place men give to it. This prized possession of the soul is elusive. It is not found. Apparently the spell has failed. And Charmides says: 'By Zeus, Socrates, I do not know whether I have it or not. For how can I know what that is which you yourself, as you say, are unable to find. However, I do not wholly believe you. And as for myself, Socrates, I think I need the spell, and nothing hinders my being under your spell so many days until you say I have enough.' Perhaps the spell has worked after all. Can one see what the beauty of Charmides is if *sophrosyne* has not been found? When found, what will one see?

There are many lovers in Plato's dialogues. With the help of the 'Charmides' to see them, perhaps we can forget a thing which, when once noted, it is more wholesome not to remember. The use to which Plato turns a practice of his day is not dependent on that practice. He would have his fellow citizens see love and uses their habits to make them see it. The total impression one gets is not an impression of depravity. The ugly thing is there, but there is also something besides the ugly thing which turns it into a shadow and turns the reader to see the light which makes the shadow fall. Plato is interested in the emotional attachments of men and not in those of men and women. These restrictions have little to do with what

he does with love. For him — and it may be said, for the Greeks of his day, generally — sex and sexual indulgence were not the curious things they have strangely become with us. They were taken for granted. Man was frankly an animal, but with a spark in him which, like the fire of Prometheus, came from the sky and was, possibly, borrowed or stolen, so that the lusts of the body were less curious than the aspirations of the soul. We accuse the Greeks of perverting sex, which they did. They might accuse us of inverting it, which we do. They — at least the more reflective of them, like Plato — looked upon all body functions as primitive. Indulgence in them, consequently, appeared to be neither unnatural nor in need of apology. What was needed was *sophrosyne*, a clear consciousness of what one was and what one was about. Given that, the sight of a beautiful body might still inflame, but the inflammation could be cured. Heavy heads and hearts and all the physical disturbances of love were consequences of the body's make-up. That could not be changed. The thing that might be changed was the soul's entanglement with it all. Love might free the soul instead of enslaving it, if only the soul were properly bewitched, properly, that is, in view of its own nature and needs. The freed soul might then see the body's madness as an illustration of love rather than the consummation of it. For love's

consummation was the comprehension of love's illustrations and not the illustrations themselves. The lover might still experience the passion and be mad in his own way, but his madness would not seek the exploitation of the objects of his love. It would rather join him and them in a common frenzy which could meet life or death with equanimity and discover what is lovable in love's significance rather than in its casual gratification. There was a difference between being possessed and possessing. The former could yield inspiration and vision, the latter, only heavy heads or broken hearts.

Plato seems to have thought that all this could be brought to consciousness in the human soul if a man would let himself, like Charmides, be questioned enough about *sophrosyne*. He deals with the theme in his own way, that characteristic way which led tradition to link his birth with Apollo. He found his material where he found love most talked of, in the haunts of men where conversation turned naturally to love from war or tragedy or business or politics, or to these from love. His characters generally, Socrates himself included, seem to be lovers first and something else second. They were controlled fundamentally by their intimacies. They could call the controlling power love and use some form or variant of the word in well-nigh a thousand compounds in their language,

so that a translator becomes distracted in the attempt to find appropriate renderings in an alien speech. To hold anything close or dear or precious, was to love it, and, possibly, to be loved by it in turn. Basal to all other considerations was this fact of having and holding, of being had and being held, through the pervading and subtle influence of personal intimacies which could express themselves all the way from fondling to a genuine enthusiasm for nobility. Men were lovers first, and, from this beginning, grew to be noble or base, and exercised upon their associates an influence commensurate with their character. In this atmosphere boys grew to manhood and learned the art of living. It was crucial who and what their lovers were and into what hands they fell, for their major education was acquired, not by going to colleges and universities, but through intimate association with their elders in sport, in conversation, and in public service, or through an almost equal association with some reputed leader of thought and opinion. Their education was more a social than a scholastic enterprise. It was crucial into what hands they fell, so crucial that Socrates, their avowed lover and champion, could be seriously accused of corrupting the young and be unable to acquit himself in the eyes of his accusers. So much had loving and being loved to do with a satisfactory social order. Plato compels us to think of Greek male society after this manner.

It is difficult to determine with confidence how far the prevalence of the love theme in the dialogues is a Platonic idiosyncrasy and how far it is the reflection of a popular consciousness. It is natural to assume the latter for Greek art and Greek poetry are strongly supporting evidence. The claim put forth in the 'Symposium' that love was a theme much neglected by the poets is not sustained by the facts. They voiced it. And it was doubtless to a responsive audience that Euripides made the chorus in his 'Medea' sing in praise of the dwellers in Attica:

> 'Sons of Erechtheus, long happy, the blessed god's children, whose land is secure and unconquered, who feed upon widely famed wisdom and walk softly through air ever-shining — there, on a time, they say Harmony, the golden, gave birth to the holy nine, the Peierian Muses.
>
> 'They tell it — the Cyprian, drawing streams from Cephisus in beauty flowing, breathes upon the measured land the winds' sweet-smelling breezes; and, ever weaving in her hair a fragrant garland of rose-buds, she sends her loves which, throned with wisdom, are partners with every virtue.'

The theme is evidently familiar to Plato's audience. It is also evident that his use of it is deliberate. He lays hold of it to make the consciousness of it more intense, to bring out its equivocal character which habit or willful blindness overlooks and to expose the comedy and tragedy which lie in love's path, but which love, rising, may pass beyond. The Greeks thought of

themselves as we are prone to think of them, as highly rational and emancipated. They were conspicuous for intelligence. But they were first of all men of emotional attachments. They thought in terms of love and hatred, of friends and enemies, and even rationalized their virtues in terms of such distinctions. It was what was dear to them that held them and their intellectuality was superimposed upon their loves. This is what Plato would have them see, sending Socrates out among them to be love's detective.

Outside the walls of Athens there was a spring known as the Spring of Panops — of him who is all-eye. Walking thither one day, Socrates came upon Hippothales and a group of young men. They were about to enter a recently built palæstra where they were wont to pass the time. Hippothales bids Socrates join them, hinting that it will be worth his while. Socrates wants to know who is the attraction and is told that there is a difference of opinion. 'But who is yours, Hippothales?' Whereupon Hippothales blushed. Lysis was in the palæstra and Hippothales was in love with Lysis. The detective draws the obvious inference from the blush and rallies the man who then blushes the more. He is far gone in love and has been making an ass of himself as his name suggests. Members of the group join in the raillery. Their ears have been so deafened with

'Lysis!' that at times they seem to hear it in their sleep. They have been deluged with descriptions, essays, and poems. These have been bad enough, but when Hippothales bursts into song with his remarkable voice, it is worse yet. And now, questioned, he blushes. He is forced to confess his love and acknowledge his compositions. These have been glorifications of the boy's family, repetitions of what every one knows — their position, their wealth, their horses, their victories in the games, even the legends of their race which link them with gods and heroes. It is all extravagant, thinks Socrates, and an ill-advised way of making love. It is nothing but an exhibition of egotism on the part of Hippothales which success may heighten, but which failure will make only the more ridiculous. There is a better way to go to work which Socrates is willing to exhibit if an opportunity is given him to meet the boy. Then he will show how one should make love. They enter the palæstra. The opportunity is there.

The time is the festival of Hermes. The boys in the palæstra, having taken part in the sacrifices, are scattered about in groups, some of them playing games while others look on. Lysis is there. He stands among the boys and young men, a wreath on his head, distinguished in appearance, deserving to be thought not only beautiful, but good as well. Socrates and his

group seat themselves and begin talking. Lysis looks as if he would like to join them, but hesitates. His dearest friend, Menexenus, enters and seeing his cousin, Ctesippus, with Socrates, takes a seat near them. Lysis follows, bringing others with him. The throng makes Hippothales self-conscious. He hides behind the others fearful lest Lysis see him and take offense. Socrates sits in the open. He asks Menexenus: 'Which of you is the older?' 'We dispute the point.' 'And which is the better born? Are you rivals in that?' 'Certainly.' 'And which is the more beautiful? Rivals again?' They both laugh. 'But I shall not ask which is the richer, for you are friends, are you not?' They reply that they are. 'Since, then, it is said that friends' belongings are shared in common, you will not differ in this, if the truth is told of your friendship.' Here they agree. The scene is the dialogue in picture — a scene for a painter: one love hiding and blushing, another love in the clear, with the beauty of youth before them — here is love presented, not so much as a theme for discussion as a reality to be beheld. And Hippothales hides to the end, looked at once by Socrates from the corner of the eye and going all colors with joy when his love comes almost to open expression in speech. He hides in the background to the end and in the end has disappeared from memory as the lover of Lysis. What is remembered is the power and quality of love to produce such a scene.

The 'Lysis' exhibits the vast difference there is between trying to define love and friendship and being friends or being in love. The former turns out to be futile. What sorts of people — nay, even things — are friends or lovers and what makes them such? Obviously, all sorts; we seek in vain for a common denominator to which to reduce those fractions of existence which add themselves together. They seem to join, in spite of all their inappropriateness and incompatibilities, as if some force, careless of what they are and what they might become, were careful only to make them illustrations of its power. What is this force? Obviously again, it is love or friendship. The words fall readily enough from the tongue. But they fall on something quite different from the thing sought, on lovers in love and friends sharing. They fall on Socrates and Hippothales — shall we say on 'saving power' and 'assininity'? The temptation is strong to press the suggestion of the names. They fall on Lysis and Menexenus — again, shall we say on 'setting-free' and 'staying-friend'? They fall naturally on youth, when the spectator sees youth in its promise, at play, bedecked and garlanded — rivals in age and position, laughingly rivals in beauty, but in 'the belongings of friends' sharers in common. What are love and friendship? Look at lovers and friends!

But look closely. Socrates has promised a demon-

stration. He proceeds with Lysis when Menexenus has been temporarily called away. The boy's parents love him, of course; and in their desire for his happiness, let him do whatever he likes. His father lets him drive out the chariots or whip the mules when he wants to and his mother lets him play with her loom. They let him run about as he pleases without attendance or supervision. Socrates is surprised to find that such is not the case, that slaves drive the chariots, whip the mules, attend his mother, and severely watch over the boy's comings and goings. Lysis is even whipped at times for disobedience. All this, thinks Socrates, is very astonishing, that a free-born boy should be ruled by slaves and not be allowed to enjoy his freedom. Why is it? Because, thinks Lysis, he has not yet sense enough; he is still an ignorant boy. Then if he had sense and were not ignorant, his parents would give him his freedom, and not only give him his freedom, but would perhaps turn over their own affairs for him to manage? They certainly would. Then is it generally true that we link freedom with sense and knowledge and that they have much to do with loving and genuine intimacy? Is it not in the hands of sense and knowledge that we want what is ours to be? Egotism is not very good when one is still very much in need of instruction. At this point, Socrates was tempted to say to Hippothales: 'This is the way.' But glancing at him and

finding him in agony and still hiding, refrained. Besides, Menexenus had returned and Lysis had said, unnoticed by his friend and in a boyish and friendly way: 'Socrates, tell Menexenus what you tell me.' — We have been to Sunday School in a palæstra and been asked to call it love-making. Well, is it? What is competition with Hippothales? What is love of the young?

We may look closer. Socrates does not tell Menexenus what he told Lysis. He leaves that for Lysis to tell. From now on, he is Socrates himself with an interest of his own. 'From boyhood I happen to have set my heart on having something just as others do. One sets his heart on having horses; another, dogs; another, wealth; another, honor. To these things, I hold lightly, but to having friends, passionately. I would rather get a good friend than the best quail or cock in the world; yes, by Zeus, than the best horse or dog. And, by the Dog, I would far rather accept a comrade than have the gold of Darius or Darius himself: I am such a comrade-lover. So, seeing you, you and Lysis, I am struck with admiration and count you happy because, being so young, you have been able to get this good quickly and easily, and you have gained him as a friend so quickly and surely and he you. But I am so far from a gain like this that I do not know how one becomes another's friend; but I would ask you about

this very thing because you have tried it. Now tell me; when one loves another, which becomes the friend of the other, the lover of the loved or the loved of the lover? Or does it make no difference?'

At first it is thought that it makes no difference, but it is not difficult for Socrates to confuse two boys. It is not difficult to confuse ourselves, for, with them, we soon arrive at loving those who hate us and find it hard to admit that those we love should love us in their turn. Is there, must there be, reciprocity in love if there is to be love at all? If there are lovers with no lovers to love them, if loving does not itself beget a response of love, it looks as if friends are not friends because they love one another, but that they love one another because they are friends. What, then, makes friends if loving does not? Some similarity of disposition which brings two together as birds of a feather flock? No. Some dissimilarity which causes a blending as when different notes fuse in a harmony? No. Something there must be, but the search for it proves fruitless. Perhaps there has not been time enough or minds able enough to make the search successful. It was getting late. The boys had to go home, leaving the making of friends a problem which friends had vainly tried to solve. There were, however, impressive moments as they vainly tried to solve it.

There is one when Socrates, using an old proverb,

links beauty with love and both with longing. The play upon these words will not readily go into English for our nouns and adjectives and participial forms are reluctant to take the expected color from the context in which they must be put. The sense is clear enough. There is the thing longed for, call it what you will — beauty, love, the loving, the loved, the lovable, the lovely, the like-love, the love-like, the dear, the endearing, the endeared, friend and the friendly, to be fellows in a fellowship which begets fellows in its turn. Call it what you will, there must be something in which all loves terminate and complete themselves. Just longing, just loving one thing for the sake of another, is love unfinished. There must be something loved for its own sake alone. Aspiration pierces through the mist of words, through the body's good and evil, through the soul's ignorance and folly, to something beyond in which longing can be stilled and satisfied. It is a high moment, this glimpse of the desired beyond desire.

But it is unstable. By a swift transition we pass to another impressive moment which leaves the boys silent, reluctantly nodding their heads, and Hippothales happy, finding his own loving coming almost to open expression. That glimpse of the beyond — a poem long drawn out — has cast a spell to be readily broken. Were the glimpse more than a glimpse, were it love attained, where then would love and loving be?

Would not longing gone be longing for its return? And where does love end as we see it end? In its own house, so to speak, in the natural and the familiar. It is said in words which carry a double meaning and which send us, for their interpretation, not to the dictionary, but to the effect they have on those hearing them. Loving is nature's affair. With lovers there is some congeniality or familiarity of soul or disposition or manners or figure when they desire or love. 'Surely,' said Menexenus, but Lysis was silent. So it has come to light that it is necessary for us to love what is naturally familiar. Menexenus said it would seem so. Then it is necessary that the real and not the pretended lover should be loved by his favorite. Lysis and Menexenus barely nodded their heads, but Hippothales went all colors with joy. Socrates soon confuses us again and concludes that we have reached no conclusion at all. He tells us that he had a mind to stir up some of the older men when the 'pedagogues' — those slaves who had charge of Greek boys — came up to drag Lysis and Menexenus away. They go followed by these words of Socrates: 'Now what a laughing stock we have become, both I, an old man, and you. For these here will go away and say we think that we are lovers of one another — for I class myself with you — but what the lover is we could not find out.'

Let other lovers try. Summoned to the bar of re-

flection — one's self included, to make the list complete — what have they to say in explanation and justification of themselves? The way of a man with a maid, the ways of the lovers with the loved — who has reduced them to science and so satisfied the inquisitive mind? Nature has illustrated the thing extravagantly, all the way from the affinities of chemicals to the love of God, yet kept its secret hidden. You can see love, but cannot tell what it is. Why try, then? Trying may have this advantage, that we see love better. Plato makes us see Hippothales and Socrates, Lysis and Menexenus — the love that hides and blushes and the love that does not, shadow and sunlight. We are not bidden to choose and certainly not to choose before we have seen. We may read a judgment into the theme, but there is no judgment there. No judgment seems to have been proposed or intended. Socrates had promised to show Hippothales how to make love. His method was not wholly extraordinary. Many besides him have found that to make love it is better to talk about love than to praise what one desires. Impersonal discussion of the seductive theme begets a subtle intimacy which may lead the participants beyond what they intended. One day they may discuss no further. We are not told what Socrates' success on this particular occasion was, although a moralist may conclude that Hippothales had no further chance with

Lysis. The dialogue alone remains. Its personages, perhaps once living men and boys, perhaps only creatures of Plato's imagination, enact their parts anew for each new reader, sending him back into life with the final words of Socrates haunting him. He has not found out what love is, but he has seen it in operation, getting confused in its philosophy, rising high and sinking low, exhibiting contrasts for which it itself is responsible, painting a picture to be remembered, and leaving behind a wonder at what love can do.

A young poet named Agathon — so we are told in Plato's 'Symposium' — won a prize with his first tragedy. Naturally he celebrated the event. He gave the customary feast in honor of it to his troup and friends. It seems to have been an exacting and boisterous entertainment, lacking in privacy. So on the evening of the following day, Agathon invited a group of his personal friends to his house, there to celebrate his victory in calmer and more intimate fashion. What happened that night became famous. The story of it passed from mouth to mouth until it became almost a legend which boys grown to manhood were eager to hear. We have it from one of them, Apollodorus, who told it to another, Glaucon. Apollodorus had it from a little old man, Aristodemus by name, who, loving Socrates, went barefoot in imitation of him and who

was present at the dinner, but Apollodorus had recently checked up the story by questioning Socrates until now he thought he had it pretty free from omissions. So the story is told again to the inquisitive Glaucon and to the delight of subsequent readers. Apollodorus evidently had a good memory and justified his boast that he had not been careless of the tale.

Aristodemus, it seems, had not been asked to the dinner. He happened to meet Socrates going there, unusually washed and slippered to grace the occasion, and was taken along. He was left, however, to enter Agathon's house alone to explain why he came and why Socrates was left behind standing agaze in a neighbor's porch. The little man was made at home by Agathon politely saying that he had looked for him yesterday, and servants were sent out to fetch Socrates. Their efforts were vain, for Socrates insisted on staying where he was. Reluctantly the dinner began without him, for Aristodemus insisted that it was useless to try to move Socrates; he would come only when it pleased him. He came when the dinner was about half over, without apology, and was bidden to a place next to Agathon. There was some banter between the two about Agathon's getting by contact the wisdom Socrates had found in the neighbor's porch, with a pretty compliment for Agathon's triumph of the other day.

The dinner finished with a libation and a song, they turned to drinking. We should not forget Socrates standing agaze in the porch. There is an aloofness about him from the beginning to the end. He alone survived that night. His little friend, indeed, followed him home in the morning, but with drowsy eyes and unsteady gait.

Much had happened between evening and morning. After the dinner it was agreed that there should be no compulsion to drink. Heads were still a little sore from the bout of the previous day and the doctor present gave a medical opinion on drunkenness. None of them wished to get drunk, at least not so soon again. The doctor proposed something better. He would have the flute-girl sent away to pipe to herself or the women within the house, and he would have the diners each in his turn, make a speech in praise of love. Phædrus, who was present, had given him the idea, for Phædrus was constantly complaining that love had never been properly praised, not even by the poets. 'No one, Eryximachus,' said Socrates, 'will vote in opposition to you. Surely I could not say no, who say that I know nothing else besides love-matters; nor Agathon and Pausanias; nor Aristophanes, indeed, whose entire business is with Dionysius and Aphrodite; nor any one else of those I see. Of course it is not quite fair for us who are reclining last in order, but if the first speak

adequately and well, it will satisfy us. With good luck let Phædrus begin and speak the praise of love.'

The speeches which follow are not satisfactorily translatable. When the best is done with them, there are many sentences which a grammarian may parse, but which a reader, bent on finding their import and intimations, will find difficult to comprehend. Ideas are juxtaposed which do not readily associate themselves in the modern mind. There is the recurrent danger that what one thinks he is reading out of these speeches, he is really reading into them. They are very equivocal. Perhaps all discourse about love is that, especially when love is praised. Lovers do such amazing things. They know astonishing intimacies, which, when love commands them, transport lovers to paradise, suffuse earth and sky with a glow all golden, weave garlands of unearthly beauty, distill the fragrance and honeyed sweetness of a thousand flowers, and enshrine an innocent god to smile upon and bless the ceremony. Love's language shuns the instruments of love's ecstasy. It turns the body into a lovely metaphor to carry over from the wonderful world of 'I' and 'Thou' — thy soul and mine — meanings which miraculously transform the acts they celebrate. With love, intimacy cannot be too intimate, for intimacy has become a sacrament. The spectator must worship, or, like Acteon, be turned into a chased and hounded

thing. All this, with love; without it, all the glory's gone. Intimacy becomes then a thing for ribald laughter, for moral condemnation, or for æsthetic disgust. If love can thus miraculously transmute that which otherwise can be mentioned with decency only by physicians and physiologists, surely love must be a god deserving praise. And yet, how shall we praise him with truth and adequacy, acknowledging the blessings he confers and not turning him into an apology for the flesh?

The speeches in the 'Symposium' which precede that of Socrates effectively raise this question. That is the important thing about them, far more important than any resolution of the difficulties which confront the reader when he tries to reduce the details of what was said to intelligible and coherent discourse. The essential drift and effect of the speeches is quite clear. They culminate in a rhapsody by Agathon which, spoken against the background of its predecessors, lifts the hearers into an ecstasy of applause. It was Phædrus who spoke first, supported by Socrates' wish that good luck attend him. Although we are told that the theme was originally his, he speaks like a first speaker called unexpectedly to his feet to collect his thoughts while words flow from his tongue. 'Love is a great god,' he tells his hearers at once, 'and a marvel among gods and men.' It was a safe announcement,

but Phædrus snatches at proofs of it. There are many, he says, and not the least of them is found in love's origin, for poets and men generally find no ancestry for love, but, like Hesiod, say, first chaos, then broad-bosomed earth, and love, or, like Parmenides, have primal Birth contrive him to be the very first of all the gods. Other proofs are not cited. This is enough to make love ancient and venerable. And being this, he is the cause of all our greatest goods. 'For I, at least, cannot tell what greater good one can have while still young than a helpful lover.' So we pass from Love the god, to lovers the mutually helpful. So solicitous are they to be the best in one another's eyes that could we contrive a city or an army of lovers and their loved ones, nothing could be better — a happy city and an invincible army, for the citizens would avoid disgrace and the soldiers would suffer death rather than dishonor or defeat. Surely Love itself imparts to lovers that courage which Homer said God inspires in heroes. And only lovers are willing to die for one another. Remember Alcestis who alone was willing to die for her husband, making his father and mother look like strangers to him and kinsmen in name only. Remember Achilles who, to avenge Patroclus, slew Hector, knowing that that deed would seal his own doom. Such men and women the gods honored. But they dishonored Orpheus, letting women slay him,

because he must needs go to Hades alive to get back a wife. 'So for my part I say that, of the gods, Love is the oldest and most honored and the most potent in working virtue and good fortune for men, both the living and the dead.'

Such in substance was the speech of Phædrus. He was followed by others whose words are not recorded and then Pausanias takes up the theme. It is evident that he, like many another subsequent speaker at a dinner, has been thinking up something to say. He listened apparently to Phædrus, but gave scant, if any, attention to the others. It is easy to imagine him reclining on his couch, waiting his turn to speak, and following the speech of Phædrus to find material for his own effort. When he begins, it is to Phædrus he addresses himself. 'Your speech, Phædrus, does not set us a good example, simply to praise Love as you have done. Now, if Love were one, it would be proper. But he is not one; and not being one, it ought to be decided beforehand what sort of love we should praise. Now I shall try to set the matter right.' He does not make a good speech, but he makes a point. There are two Loves, one heavenly and noble, the other vulgar and profane. Only the former is worthy of praise. This Phædrus had overlooked in his indiscriminate eulogy. Pausanias has now a theme to develop. He starts with a broad generalization and applies it to the

particular case of loving. No act, he says, such as drinking, singing, or speaking, is in itself either noble or base. It gets it nobility or baseness from the way it is done. So in loving, the heavenly and the vulgar, the noble and the base, the decent and the indecent, have nothing to do with the acts as such of a man in love, but everything to do with the manner of them. Proper love is all a matter of the proper persons, proper times, proper motives, proper benefits, and the like. Given these, it is silly to blame or condemn whatever lovers do. Pausanias is so much in love with his point that he carries it over into politics. He would have the law and society openly acknowledge and enforce his position. He would have not only public toleration, but also public commendation when refined, cultured, and philosophical persons indulge their affection for one another, and public contempt for such indulgence when refinement is lacking. Such indulgence is an obvious privilege of the cultured and a means toward a further refinement of their natures. Good men voluntarily observe this principle as their own law, but the vulgar need a civic law to restrain them. Especially between youth and their elders should proper love be encouraged, for its encouragement adds a charm and graciousness to that environment in which youth flourishes and flowers. 'For you, Phædrus, I throw together off-hand these thoughts about love.' And Pausanias pauses — so the Greek puns on his name.

Aristophanes was to have spoken next, but couldn't. Too much of something — the food or the wine or Pausanias' speech — had given him the hiccough. He appeals to the doctor at his side. 'Eryximachus, you must either stop my hiccough or speak instead of me until I have stopped it myself.' 'I will do both,' said the doctor. 'I will speak in your place and when you have stopped, you will speak in mine. While I am speaking, the hiccough may be willing to stop of itself after you have held your breath for a long time. If not, gargle with water. If it is still very bad, take up something to tickle your nostrils and sneeze. If you do this once or twice, it will stop even if it is very bad.' 'Speak at once, and I'll do it,' said Aristophanes. So the doctor speaks. He seems eager to do so, so eager in fact that one suspects that he had suggested the evening's entertainment in order to have an opportunity to set forth his ideas before a choice and distinguished company. Although he starts with the distinction between two kinds of love which Pausanias had made, his speech is not impromptu. It is like the expression of a cherished and pet idea to which his reflections as a physician had led him. Had it not been for what Pausanias had said, the doctor would probably have talked of love and hate as the great forces which control nature in her varied workings, for his speech reminds one of old Empedocles, the philosopher of love

and hate. He accommodates his words, however, to the occasion. He is the man of science. He finds in his own profession not only an art which cures the sick, but also a key which unlocks the secrets of nature and reveals the forces which shape the destiny of men and things. He finds in them what poets sing about when they sing of love and hate and what Pausanias was talking about when he talked of the heavenly and the vulgar love. The art of medicine implies a knowledge of the love affairs of the body, of those affinities which render its condition good or ill. Indeed it is with love the physician deals, promoting it when it is helpful and removing it when it is harmful. When once this is recognized, love is seen to be no longer something peculiarly human. Animals are subject to it and plants. In fact, nature as a whole illustrates fortunate and unfortunate unions. What is fine weather but the blending of happy elements, or storms and pestilences, but unlawful joinings of malignant powers? Pausanias' distinction really goes to the heart of the whole matter, for nature is essentially a matter of proper and improper loves. Medicine is but one illustration of this philosophy turned into an art. Athletics, agriculture, music, politics, all disclose the same principle of motivation. Even religious sacrifices and ceremonies are methods of promoting the proper love between gods and men, establishing piety and driving out impiety.

For what are piety and impiety but healthy and unhealthy loves between God and man? So it is wholly Love which has all power, supreme power, when with temperance and justice, it accomplishes good things, procures us every good fortune, enables us to associate with one another and be friends even to the gods above us. The doctor admits that he may have, in spite of himself, left out much in the praise of love, but if he has, he leaves it to Aristophanes to make good. For Aristophanes had stopped his hiccough.

It had been a bad case, however, cured only after the sneezing had been applied. Aristophanes tells the doctor that it is astonishing that the orderly arrangement of his body longed for such noises and ticklings, and the doctor suspects that the comic poet is poking fun at him. He pokes fun at the whole proceeding by inventing a new anthropology. Properly to understand love, one must understand how the human race came to be what it now is. We were not always as we are. Originally there were three sexes, the male, the female, and the double-sexed. Each individual was spherical in shape, well-rounded and complete in itself, and reproduced its kind without intercourse with others. All had two heads, four arms, and four legs so that they faced both ways and could move about with remarkable quickness and agility. Although they rendered service to the gods, they grew insolent

and threatened to assault heaven. This worried Zeus. He was ready to destroy these ambitious creatures, but he hated to lose their prayers and sacrifices. At last, a bright idea occurred to him. He would cut them in two. This would, to be sure, double their number, but it would halve their strength, and if this did not succeed, he would cut them again so that they would go hopping about on one leg. So he halved them and sent Apollo properly to sew them up. The result was unfortunate. The poor, dissevered things would do nothing but throw their arms about one another in attempts to become whole again. They were in danger of perishing from hunger and idleness. It was pitiful, when one half died, to see the other aimlessly embracing others. So Zeus sent Apollo to perform another operation which made the half-persons sex-conscious. Of course there was embracing as before, but the embrace brought a satisfaction which lasted long enough to allow the participants to engage meanwhile in other business. So Zeus's problem was solved. The human race was kept going by a natural instinct and came to exhibit the sex peculiarities everywhere observable — men that love men, women that love women, men that love women, and women that love men. Everything depends on the kind of half one is. We all go about looking for our appropriate other half. That is why some men marry for love, others as a social

duty, while others remain bachelors, preferring their own sex to the opposite. These last are the really manly men. All this explains a striking peculiarity of lovers. They never seem to be wholly satisfied, but are always longing for something more than all their love supplies. The soul of each is eager for something which it cannot voice. But suppose that Hephæstus should visit a pair of lovers and ask them if they would like to be wholly welded together into one being to enjoy a single existence here and hereafter, living a single life and dying a single death, they would gladly accept such an offer, finding in it the consummation of their souls' desire; so deep seated in our partial lives is the longing to be one and whole forever. The cause of all this is that such we were to begin with. Our unhappy lot is the consequence of our original impiety. Our duty, then, is to reverence the gods in the hope that they will guide us to find our fitting other half and so restore to us our original bliss. 'Such, Eryximachus, is my speech about love. Do not turn it into a comedy.'

Then Agathon speaks. Flushed with his recent victory he knows that much is expected of him. And he is a poet. Poetic justice has not been done to love. The other speakers, instead of really praising the god, have congratulated men on having the goods which the god brings. But it is a god of whom we should sing. 'So I say, speaking with reverence and without offense,

that of all the happy gods, he is the happiest, the most beautiful, and the best. He is the most beautiful, for first, O Phædrus, he is the youngest of the gods. He himself gives the great proof of this: like a fugitive he flees old age which is clearly quick to come upon us, quicker than we would. Love's nature is to hate it and not come near it. But he is young and ever with the young. As the old proverb well says, "Like draws to like always." Though I agree with Phædrus in much else, I do not agree in this, that Love is older than Chronos and Iapetus. I affirm that he is youngest of the gods and always young. Those old things which Hesiod and Parmenides relate about the gods, sprang, if they tell the truth, from Necessity and not from Love. For mutilations and bindings of one another and many other violent things would not have happened, if Love had been among them; there would have been friendship and peace, as there is now since Love has reigned over the gods. So he is young, and besides being young, he is tender. It needs a poet like Homer to set forth his divine tenderness. For Homer says that Ate is both divine and tender — the feet of her are tender —

> Her tender feet: for the ground
> She nears not, but steps upon the heads of men.

With fair proof, I think, her tenderness appears, that she sets foot not upon the hard, but on the soft. The

same proof we use for love, that he is tender. For not on earth he goes nor on skulls, but into the softest things there are, he enters and dwells. In the characters and souls of gods and men he sets up his house, but not in every soul that comes along; if he happens upon one with a hard character, he goes away, if soft, he stays. Clinging ever, foot and all, to the softest of the softest things, he must be most tender. He is then youngest and tenderest, and besides supple in form. For he could not so wholly enfold himself and first secretly go in and out of any soul if he were hard. Of the symmetry and suppleness of his form the great proof is the gracefulness which Love admittedly has above all others. Between gracelessness and Love there is always mutual war. The god's feeding upon flowers shows in the beauty of his skin. On soul or body or aught else that is flowerless or withered Love does not light, but where there is blossom and fragrance there he alights and stays.

'Even this is enough about the beauty of the god, though much remains to be said. I must speak next of Love's virtues. The greatest is that he wrongs neither god nor man, nor is wronged by them. Nor does he suffer violence if he suffer at all. Nor does he do violence; for all serve Love willingly in everything; and what one willingly consents to with the willing, the laws of a sovereign city say is just. Next to justice

he shares abundant temperance. For temperance is acknowledged to be the control of pleasures and desires and no pleasure is stronger than Love. If weaker, they must be controlled by Love. He does control. And by controlling pleasures and desires Love must be eminently temperate. In courage, not even Ares stands against Love, for Ares does not hold Love, but Love, Ares — the love of Aphrodite as they say. The holder is stronger than the held; and he that controls him that is braver than others must be the bravest of all. I have told of the god's justice and temperance and courage; his wisdom remains. Here I must try my best not to fail. And first, that I may in turn honor my art as Eryximachus honored his, the god is a poet, so wise that he makes many another. Every one becomes a poet even if he were museless before, should Love get him; which fact we may fitly see as proof that Love as poet is good in the chief thing in all poetry, the inspiring of it. For what one neither has nor knows, he can neither give another nor teach another. And the making of all living creatures — who will deny that it is Love's wisdom by which comes into being and grows everything that lives? And in the pursuit of the arts do we not know that he whose teacher this god becomes, turns out famous and brilliant, while he whom Love has not laid hold of is obscured? Archery, medicine, and prophecy Apollo

found out with desire and love to lead him, so that he also would be Love's disciple — and the Muses in music, Hephæstus in metal-working, Athene in weaving, and Zeus in piloting gods and men. That the affairs of the gods have been arranged by indwelling Love is evident from their beauty; for with ugliness there is no Love. Before him, as I said at first, many terrible things happened to the gods, as we are told, through the dominion of Necessity. Since this god came, by loving beautiful things all good things have come to gods and men.

'So, Phædrus, I think that Love, being first of all most beautiful and best, is after this the cause of such qualities in others. It comes to me to speak in measured verse how he it is that makes

> Peace among men; at sea a calm
> Of perfect stillness; bed for winds; and sleep in sorrow.

He empties us of enmity, fills us with fellowship, making us all come together in such gatherings as this; in feasts, in dances, in sacrifices, becoming the leader; purveyor of gentleness, destroyer of brutality; dear giver of good-will, no giver of ill-will; gracious, kindly; to be visioned by men, to be admired by gods; envy of the unfortunate, treasure of the fortunate; of delicacy, of splendor, of luxury, of graces, of longing, of yearning, the father; careful of the good, careless of the bad; in toil, in fear, in drink, in speech, a pilot, a captain, a

comrade and best savior; ornament of gods and men together; leader fairest and best whom every man needs must follow gladly singing, sharing the song *he* sings as he touches with magic the thoughts of all gods and men.

'There, Phædrus, is my speech which I would offer to the god, with something of lightness and something of measured seriousness, as best I could.'

There was applause and the sense of climax. The beauty of Agathon in his enthusiasm and the mounting fervor of his speech had thrilled them. He had done the thing desired. Was it, however, the thing to do if one really wants instruction in matters of love? Praise is one thing, truth another. Perhaps we praise love to conceal the truth about it. Would one who really understood love assent to what Agathon had said? Socrates professes to be troubled about such matters. He is afraid to speak unless he is allowed to speak in quite a different fashion. He can neither match nor excel the eloquence of Agathon and would be a fool to try. Perhaps he was a fool anyway to consent to take part in the entertainment. He ought to have known better and would have run away if he could. He had expected that they would all try to find out what about love was worth praising instead of proceeding to praise it whether or no. The eulogistic attitude is a bad attitude to start with. Socrates cannot and will not speak

after that fashion, but he will speak in his own way if he is allowed first to ask Agathon a few simple questions. The few simple questions are allowed. They spoil the effect of Agathon's speech and turn the discussion into a different channel. Socrates asks Agathon if love is not love *of* something. If we speak of love as a person, does he not want something he does not have and how can he be that which he does not have? Admittedly he wants beauty and goodness. How then can he be himself either beautiful or good? 'I cannot contradict you, Socrates,' said Agathon. 'Let it be as you say.' 'You cannot contradict the truth, loved Agathon, but it is not hard to contradict Socrates.'

We enter on a new scene in that evening's drama. Love is neither beautiful nor good; nor is he a god. Socrates had once thought otherwise, but a woman, Diotima, had convinced him of his error just as he had now convinced Agathon. He can do no better than repeat what she once said to him. Throwing your ideas into the form of a story of your experience has a characteristic effect. You say to your hearers, Let me tell you something which happened to me; what somebody once told me. You thus make yourself one with your audience and listen with them to an authority other than your own. The Mantinean woman was not present to be questioned or contradicted. She was

a past experience to be remembered and talked about. She had produced a marked effect on Socrates. Perhaps she would produce that effect again and on his hearers as well. Although we are still at Agathon's party, we soon forget it and sit with Socrates at Diotima's feet, to learn from her about love. We must be careful of the adjectives we use when we describe Love, for he is an equivocal being, belonging not wholly to the world of men nor wholly to the world of the gods. He is a kind of spirit, something midway between the earthly and the heavenly, a being whose office it is to mediate between the two. He is like the neither good nor bad, the neither wise nor foolish; something with a possibility and a career. This we should recognize first of all, for it is a childish and hasty habit which puts all things into opposite worlds and so loses the powers which mediate between above and below. Love is one of these powers, neither good nor bad, wise nor foolish, beautiful nor ugly, god nor man. We must look for him elsewhere than in the worlds these adjectives describe. But where?

When Aphrodite was born the gods made a feast. With the others came Poros, the Resourceful, son of Metis, the Cunning. After they had feasted, Penia, or Poverty, came to beg at heaven's door. She found Poros asleep in Zeus's garden, for he had drunk deeply of nectar, and in her resourcelessness thought to bear a

child by so resourceful a father. So she lay with Poros and conceived Love who was ever after to be the son of Plenty and Want. He has also been a follower and servant of Aphrodite because he was conceived on her birthday and so is naturally a lover of beauty. But being the son of Poros and Penia, he has this fortune, he is always poor and neither tender nor beautiful. He is hard and dry, shoeless and homeless. He lies bedless on the ground or sleeps on doorsteps or in the open streets. Like his mother he is always in need. Like his father he is a plotter against the beautiful and good; bold, reckless, eager; a great hunter, always weaving snares. He is clear and resourceful of mind, philosophizing all his life, a terrible sorcerer, poisoner, and sophist. Being neither mortal nor immortal he lives one day, when in plenty, and dies the next, in want. But he comes to life again through his father's nature, yet only to die again. So Love is neither rich nor poor. He is between wisdom and folly.

If this is love, of what value is he to men? It were better to ask, of what value may he be? With some such change of questions, Diotima turns from love to love's object. What is all this living and dying of love for? The fable is forgotten except as it is translated into all that scheming resourcefulness which we employ to beget out of the poverty of our existence at least the semblance of a richness that does not fade. Love after

all is nature's effort to outwit death by continually contriving new instances of life. Although men die, they hope to live in their offspring, in the children they beget, in the reputations they make, in the works which they create — in the children of the body, but beyond these, in the children of the soul. Homer lives in the beauty of his poem, Alcestis and Achilles in the glory of their sacrifice, Lycurgus in the justice of his laws, statesmen in the splendor of their cities, the teacher in the new souls he has inspired. To some such issue men are impelled by love and are led to believe that their end can be attained by commerce with the beautiful. Love, in spite of all its vagaries, is love of beautiful things in expectation of immortality. It courts the ugly only through ignorance or mistake. And here we may discover how valuable love may be made for man. Only let him stop thinking of love as a pleasure or a god or as something in itself beautiful and good, and turn it into the serious pursuit of its real object, then there is opened to him a career which ends in the vision of a splendor which never fades.

We may climb from love to love as a man climbs a ladder. There is first the body's beauty as it shines in the person of some one whom we hold dear. That is a first step only, for that beauty is soon seen to be shared. No one possesses it absolutely. So we step higher, to love, not the possessor, but the thing possessed. We

begin to see beauty as something more wonderful than these passing illustrations of it which flower and fade. From the beauty of bodies we climb to the beauty of souls, loving it with an intenser and more passionate love, longing to beget souls set on that still higher beauty which binds together the laws and institutions and ordinances of men in one fellowship of mutual aspiration. We may climb still higher, to the beauty revealed by knowledge. There we are on the high sea. There the great discovery awaits us — absolute beauty seen; beauty that comes not into being nor passes away, that neither waxes nor wanes, that is free from the limitations of time and place and circumstance, free from those mortal and clouded mirrors in which the dying glimpse it, like face and hands, and body, earth and sky; beauty only, whole and entire, which, while other things that change from birth to death reflect it, is changeless in its deathless glory forever. Would a man's life be worthless if he by so passing beyond the mists and illusions of his body's world, could have that vision, and become god's friend? To beget this vision is to be born into immortality.

This is what Diotima told Socrates with many variations on the mounting themes. There was a moment of suspense, the face of Socrates must have been shining as his eyes strained to catch that vision. We think of him agaze in the neighbor's porch while the others

waited for him to come — him who, like the child of Plenty and Want, was poor, went shoeless so often, slept where it was hard, with hardly a cloak to cover his dry body; yet who was always plotting and scheming with the snare of beautiful words to catch the young and the beautiful. We think of him agaze again, lost in wonder. He turns to his hearers; 'This is what Diotima told me. I believe it and try to make others believe it.' He finds them ready to praise and Aristophanes beginning to speak, but there is tumult at the door; beauty enters — drunk.

It is Alcibiades, the most beautiful man in Athens, reputed lover and beloved of Socrates. He came in very drunk, supported by friends, and stood for a moment at the door, crowned with ivy and violets, fluttering with ribbons. He has come to crown Agathon if they will let such a drunken fellow join them and make amends for his absence of yesterday. He gets a tumultuous welcome. He begins to bind Agathon's head, the ribbons blinding his eyes so that he does not see Socrates. A place is made for him at table. As he turns to take it, he exclaims: 'Hercules! What is this? Is this Socrates? Are you lying in ambush here for me again, as usual, to appear suddenly where I think you least likely to be? Now, why have you come? And why do you lie there and not by Aristophanes or some one else who is laughable or willing to be, but scheme

for a place by the most beautiful man here?' We have dropped from the ladder's top with a heavy thud. This is the climax of the 'Symposium,' this bringing of Alcibiades and Socrates face to face after that soaring speech. It is not what any one has said that has shown us what love is as Plato would have us see it. It is this dramatic incident with its setting. Had Plato, when he wrote this piece, been the kind of philosopher and the kind of moralist he is sometimes supposed to have been or may have been as reputed author of the 'Laws,' he would have sent us home after Diotima had instructed us. He would have let Socrates have the last word. He does do that in the sequel, as we shall see, but the last word there is a comment on life by the one clear-headed survivor of that night and not a philosophy of beauty. Eryximachus, the doctor and man of science, would have love expounded and explained. Plato defeats him by putting it on the stage. He lets Socrates transform a passion of the body into a vision of the soul and then confronts beauty in the abstract with beauty in the concrete so that we know not whether to laugh, to be shocked, or to cry. Ought Alcibiades to have marred that lifting speech? But how many a lifting speech, how many an aspiration is marred by a knocking at the door? The world we live in has the habit of rudely breaking in upon the philosophies by which we leave it. We wash our

hands; how long can they stay clean? Body and soul, soul and body — they are the chief actors in love's drama and forever steal each other's clothes. And which is love? Poets and doctors and scientists and dramatists and novelists and philosophers keep on trying to tell while Socrates and Alcibiades recline side by side at the same feast.

But the night at Agathon's is not yet over. Alcibiades is called upon for a speech, after he himself has called for a bumper all around, complained that they are all sober, and proposed himself as the leader of the feast from now on. He, too, must praise love. He refuses. He is too drunk to make a sober speech; besides, with Socrates there, he can talk about nothing but Socrates. With the brutal frankness of a drunken man, he tells of his relations with him. His description of the man has often been taken for a portrait. Socrates is like Silenus and the satyr Marsyas both in looks and character. He is particularly like the toy figures of Silenus to be found in the shops with pipes and flutes in their hands and full of little images of the gods when you open them. That is Socrates. He is always piping or fluting a tune to entice you to see what is inside of him. It's a wonderful tune even if the words are prose instead of verse, and it has quite a different effect from the eloquence of men like Pericles. It has a most distressing effect, makes your heart throb, brings tears to

your eyes, fills you with discontent with what you are. Alcibiades knows what it is from a distressing experience. Socrates has been his torment and well-nigh ruined his life; for, when he is with Socrates, he is humble and ashamed of himself and feels he must do what Socrates bids him, but when he goes away, he yields to the crowd. The worst of it is that he once made a real effort to be good from which he has never quite recovered, for he is still tormented by this seductive man. He had seen something of those gods inside Socrates and had convinced himself that the best thing for him to do was to bind Socrates to himself in ties of mutual affection and so have the best of friends to guide his erring youth. Socrates was always seeking out good-looking young men, so Alcibiades tried with his own beauty to seduce him. It was a very distressing experience. Alcibiades was bashful and timid about it, always finding it difficult to carry the thing through even under favorable circumstances, for Socrates acted as if nothing of the sort were going on and as if he didn't care a straw for the beauty of the handsomest man in the world. So Alcibiades made a final effort, kept Socrates all night, poured out his heart to him, offered him all he was and had. Socrates' innocent reply was a doubt whether Alcibiades would get anything but bronze in return for gold. But what was wanted, urged Alcibiades, was the best for both of

them. If that was it, Socrates would attend to it to-morrow. But to-night — though Alcibiades covered himself and Socrates with his cloak, it was only sleep that Socrates wanted. After that, in spite of his humiliation, Alcibiades could not help admiring the man, he was such a paragon of temperance and sobriety. Yes, he couldn't help admiring him and was still his slave. The two had been comrades in arms. Socrates endured all hardships without complaint, was convivial but never drunk, and had a queer habit at times of standing all day in the same place trying to solve some problem. He was noted for his courage. He had once saved Alcibiades' life and in the flight from Delium had kept even old Laches from losing his head. Much more might be said, but the simple fact is that Socrates isn't like anybody else in the world. His talk is like nobody else's. You would think it was about cobblers and tanners, but cut his words open — like those toy figures — and they are full of the most beautiful images of divine things. However, the company should not forget how insolently Alcibiades had been treated. And he was not the only one. There was Charmides and Glaucon and others. As for Agathon, he had better watch out; lest he too suffer like the fool of the fable.

There is laughter. Socrates taunts Alcibiades with being sober and trying to conceal his real object, which is to make trouble between himself and Agathon.

There is some banter about this and then another tumult at the door. A crowd of revellers bursts in and turns that evening's entertainment, which started out to be so quiet and orderly, into a carouse. Eryximachus, Phædrus, and some others get up and go home. The little Aristodemus, who is supposed to be telling the story, himself goes to sleep — and slept a good while, for the nights were long. At dawn, when the cocks were crowing, he woke up to find everybody else either asleep or gone home except Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates. They were passing about a big cup from one to another and Socrates was talking. Aristodemus couldn't quite make out what it was about, for he had missed the beginning of it and was sleepy. He got the impression that Socrates was trying to convince them that a man must be a comedian to be a tragedian or a tragedian to be a comedian. The others were following with difficulty and nodding sleepily. First Aristophanes dropped off, and then, when day dawned, Agathon. Socrates made them comfortable, got up and went away, followed by his friend. He went to the Lyceum, took a bath, and having spent the day as usual, went home to bed.

Perhaps, if, having talked of love this way and that and known what its intoxication is, you go home sober, bathe, and attend to the ordinary duties of the day, confessing the tragic and the comic figure that you are,

you will have found out what love is and caught a glimpse of absolute beauty shining through the mist. Plato wrote a symposium to show it, but a symposium in which there is more than speeches.

The 'Phædrus' also deals with love, but in a different setting. We are taken away from feasting and rioting, away from the city's bustle and noise and tiring streets. Socrates and Phædrus walk leisurely along, barefoot, in the cool water of the Ilissus, until they come to a tall plane tree whose spreading branches shade a landing place. The sacred willow is in full bloom. The air is fragrant. A pretty spring flows below the tree, its water cool to the testing foot. The place seems like a shrine with its figures and statues of nymphs and the river-god. A sweet and gentle breeze breathes upon it. Aloft the cicadas in chorus are singing their clear summer-song. The grass on the sloping ground makes an easy pillow for the head. Not far away is the spot where Boreas is said to have carried off Oreithyia. To this atmosphere of enchantment Socrates and Phædrus have come in order that Phædrus may read to Socrates a little book by Lysias in praise of intimacy without love. Late in the afternoon they leave the place with a prayer. As the hours glide by, they talk of many things — of loving and not loving, of the soul, its nature and career, of good speaking

and writing and of bad — and every now and then, as they talk, the plane tree, the willow, the water, the nymphs, the cicadas, the legend, remind them where they are. This blending of the setting with the discourse makes of the 'Phædrus' something more than an exposition of ideas. Let the reader search it for doctrine if he will, but it confronts him with a myth and a story — a myth in which imagery outruns intelligibility and a story which abolishes the alphabet. The total effect is like that of haunting music which a programme writer may spoil by trying to explain it. It were better to sit in the shade of the plane tree and hear Socrates talk while the cicadas sing.

If one would analyze at all, it were better to analyze the structure than the substance of this piece. There are two speeches on love which disgrace it, the one which Lysias wrote and the other extemporized by Socrates to show that it is easy to better the argument. They both would have love's intimacy without love's presence and make of lovers foolish, quarrelsome, selfish, faithless things who spoil the prospects of a youth who would enjoy to the full his opportunities to rise in life. Intimates not swayed by the passion are to be preferred. Phædrus reads the speech of Lysias, pleased with its novelty. Socrates speaks his with covered head, but breaks off, half-done, with an hexameter:

Wolves are in love with sheep, so the amorous with their darlings.

He has covered his head in shame. Surely he will be struck blind for defaming love, as Homer and Stesichorus were for defaming Helen unless, unlike the former and quicker than the latter, he makes his recantation. He must speak again and worthily. The spirit that warns him of evil, has warned him in time. There follows from his lips the praise of madness, of the enthusiasm which flows from the gods, and then, one of Plato's great myths of the soul.

The soul is deathless and has seen the beauty of deathless things beyond the sky. Our human souls have somehow fallen from that height, but still see beauty through the body's quickest sense and are moved to love. Could the deathless things themselves enter through our eyes, loves would be terrible. How this is so our human speech is too feeble to tell. It flies to imagery. The soul is like a driver of winged horses, one eager for heaven, the other for earth. Its proper course is in that far-off country where the gods dwell in endless happiness and delight. We read of plains and meadows and mountains and highways, but a map of that country would be difficult to draw, for it is surveyed, not by an engineer, but by a poet. There are limits and boundaries and places. These, however, are not the nouns of a geographical description, but the flaming adjectives of an enraptured vision. Gods are

named, to lose their names in excellencies desired. Virtues are enumerated, to be transformed from habits of action into treasures to possess. It is God's country, beyond the flaming ramparts of the world, where there are no *things*, but only joys. Souls must drive with skill — it is sometimes driving, sometimes flying — if they are to keep these straining horses true to the ever mounting course. As they fail, they fall. They get incarnated in men — even animals — of every sort so that the birth of a soul on earth is not the beginning of its career, but the measure of its degradation. Their hope now lies in memory. Spurred by the recollection of the glory from which they came, they may still control the wayward horse or spread their wings toward heaven. Interweaving such imagery with comments on logic, on philosophy, on politics, on human frailty and passion, Socrates would make love to be the homesickness of the soul. Men say that love is winged, but the gods say that love must get wings so that the soul may fly to its own land.

What will they talk of next, Phædrus and Socrates? Of rhetoric and composition, of how to make a good speech. They make many a point which has found its way into the textbooks or given historians clues for writing on theories of style in Plato's day. But Socrates ends his treatise on writing and speaking with a story from Egypt. A clever god, named Theuth, invented

the alphabet. He was so proud of it that he showed it to another god, named Thamos, who was at the time king of the country. The king asked what the invention was good for and Theuth replied that it was good for the Egyptians, it would make them wise and improve their memory. The king thought otherwise. Calling Theuth the father of the alphabet, Thamos told him that if the Egyptians ever adopted his offspring, they would thereafter put confidence in words instead of in their memories and intelligence; they will read much and learn little. Socrates thinks Thamos was right. Words, after they are spoken or written, are dead. At best they are only reminders of what once lived. The great speech, the speech well worth a man's making, is not the thing he writes in a book, but the thing that lives in his soul. There words are questioned to see what answers they will give. That is what they are for and not to leave a man thinking he knows something when he does not know. Great speech is a search, something like a remembering, for it seeks to find in the soul words which once found lead the soul to recognize the thing it sought. To know is to recognize. And everything is strange until the soul has found it to be familiar. They who believe this are the real lovers. They are not wise like the gods who have nothing to forget, nor foolish like the senseless who have nothing to remember; they are between the two,

lovers of wisdom, philosophers, enamored of the vision which clarifies. This is the message which Phædrus and Socrates from that enchanted spot by the Ilissus should carry back to those they love. 'It shall be so,' said Phædrus, 'but let us be going for the heat has grown milder.' 'Should we not pray first?' 'Why not?' 'Dear Pan and other gods who may be here, grant that I may grow beautiful from within; may what I have and what I am be friendly; may I count the wise man rich; and my store of gold be as much as a sober soldier may take as his spoil. — Do we need anything else, Phædrus? That is prayer enough for me.' 'For me, too; for lovers share.' 'Let us be going.'

Let us, too, be going. There is much to remember — Charmides, Lysis, Hippothales, Agathon's dinner, the shrine by the river, the alphabet — if we are neither gods nor senseless.

VI

DEATH

Echecrates: Were you, Phædo, yourself with Socrates the day he drank the poison in prison, or did you hear of it from someone else?

Phædo: I was there myself, Echecrates.

Echecrates: Then what did the man say before his death; and how did he die?

The Phædo

ALTHOUGH death is a natural and inevitable event, it persists in being strange and unintelligible. It is life's end and not its consummation. It puts a stop to a man's existence without completing it, so that we rarely think of death except when circumstances imply its nearness or when we deliberately reflect on the changes and chances of this mortal life. Prudence may counsel us that we should always be prepared to die and wisdom may advise us that death is not at all to be feared, but counsel and advice do not go well together. If being prepared to die means having things in readiness for the event, surely the event is in some respect to be feared. The consequences following upon it, either for ourselves or others, are, at least, uncertain.

They may be of an unfortunate kind which the proper preparation may avert or render unlikely. Even when the consequences are conceived wholly in terms of this present world, to be prepared for death is to be prepared for a calamity. The moral readiness for death is an affirmation of courage and not the setting of one's house in order for a funeral. If, on the other hand, death is not to be feared, preparation for it would seem to be unnecessary. It may be said that wisdom shows here its superiority to prudence, for if it really should abolish all fear of death, it would leave life free to make its own choices and decisions irrespective of the fatal and inevitable event. Yet in this wisdom does not succeed. Its difficulty is not essentially the moral one of letting life choose indifferently the good or bad, for life operates with these distinctions in any event and wisdom is very conscious of them. Its difficulty is of the prudential kind. Wisdom may be competent enough to set life on the road to the good instead of to the bad, but it has to urge care and expedition if even a little progress is to be made. Time is crucially important. It will not do for wisdom to admit that any moment of excellence is sufficient. If it did, it would have to confess its futility and admit that a good life might as well end at its beginning, which would be a curious admission to make and would leave wisdom with little, if any, justification of its own choices. It

would seem to make no difference whether a man died when he began to be good or when he began to be bad. If it did make a difference, then clearly death would have something to do with the matter. It could not be left out of the account. Some preparation in view of it is called for. So fearlessness of death, like the readiness for it, must be set down as a moral quality.

Nor can we take the counsel of prudence and the advice of wisdom independently, as if they had nothing to do with each other. There is, doubtless, much in saying that if we prepare for death, we need not fear it, and if we do not fear it, we may prepare for it intelligently. Prudence and wisdom by thus playing into each other's hands might reach the same result in the end. The preparation without the fear and the fearlessness without the preparation, so far as it is possible for us to divorce them, tend to make death increasingly important. Seriously to make of life either a preparation for death or a defiance of it, is to exalt death to the determining factor by which one lives. This is a very strange thing to do, so strange that instances of it are regarded as morbid or foolish by those who think themselves healthy and sane. Most of us seek a middle ground between asceticism and adventure or practice the two on different occasions. Most of us try to play safe, as it were, never quite willing to turn our lives into a progressive quitting of the world and never quite

willing to run the daily risk of quitting it unexpectedly. Our practice in this regard may be noble or ignoble according as we support it by considerations which lend such coloring to it, or illustrate it by choices which recognize the distinction. It is safe playing none the less, the recognition of a risk that is run no matter with what confidence or doubt we assume it. So we seem driven again to the same conclusion that readiness to die and fearlessness of death are moral qualities or attitudes which a man may exhibit or assume. The readiness is not all, nor the fearlessness. Both are in view of death. So death, although as a natural event it simply stops a man from being what he was, has an effect quite different from the stopping of existence — the effect of making itself important for the attitude in which life is lived.

It is natural, therefore, to judge a man who has had much experience of life, partly, at least, from the manner in which he meets death or the immanence of it. Is he ready and fearless? His friends would have him so, partly on their own account and partly on his. The spectacle of futile regret for things left undone or of terror at the approach of that which will come eventually, is not good to remember of one that has been esteemed. These things were best forgotten if they happened. And if they happened, death often has the effect of suppressing them or rectifying them in mem-

ory. Indeed, some ceremony often attends a dying man and is welcome, if he is able to bear it. The friends about him may emphasize the parting and show their grief at losing him, yet it is not strange if they expect some assurance from him that he is ready and unafraid, for that will both hallow the memory of him and strengthen their own hope of meeting death as a man should. With this expectation and with death's presence near, it is thought that one will more certainly speak the truth than when he is confident of the chance to take back his words or alter them to a different meaning. The last words of the dying are to be treasured, if they can be, to be repeated afterwards, not simply as memorials of them, but as expressing something of that philosophy which their living has worked out and which others may take as a suggestion or a guide. Things that may not be readily believable under other circumstances, may be believable then, for a man about to die, if his faculties are unimpaired, is suspected, even by the incredulous, of having them at that time especially alert and keen, no matter if sober reflection declares this to be unlikely. The dead, if they could, could tell much; he that is about to die may tell something. For it must be confessed that our best efforts to divest death of mystery and say, "Tis common,' rarely, if ever, succeed, and do not succeed at all when a great man passes away.

His passing should be noble. There seems to be no merit, in those who would not have every passing similar, if that were possible, for no matter what or who we are, we would at least bury the dead with decent ceremony no matter who or what they were. It is something, therefore, for the living to know the temper in which a man dies. If he is dear to them, they would have him ready and fearless for their own sakes.

And for his sake, too. They cannot, out of decency and natural feeling, conceal their sorrow, but they would transmute it into an effort to support and encourage him. They are ready to do whatever he desires, more ready, possibly, than they have ever been before and more ready, possibly, than they will ever be again. They will attend to things — an assurance which, although not wholly free from the cynical implication that his resources are past, is intended to free him from care and make readiness easier. They may even go to such excess in this as to make it seem as if his continuing among them were no longer needed, but all this is to the same effect and to assure him that he has no reason to fear, at least for what he leaves behind. Freed from that there may be the more courage for what — if anything — lies before. It will not do to cry out, 'What will become of us when you are gone?' It will not do, if it is the cry of despair. It can

be permitted only as an expression of sorrow which may in turn provoke expressions of reassurance and comfort on the other's part. He is prompted to comfort them and to tell them that he has confidence in them and that all will be well with him. Readiness proceeds to willingness and with willingness there is little fear. There is ever reluctance to let the dying die alone. They should be attended to the edge of existence. Death among perfect strangers or alone is lacking in those humane attachments which make it significant for the living. It is, like death by accident, impersonal even to him who suffers it, for dying is then more like something he suffers than something he does. It is natural to want to go home to die. The intimacy of the death chamber, the sociability surrounding it, the publicity of funerals, the readiness to stop the world's wheels on occasion and give up all the usual business of life, the monuments and memorials of the dead, the memory of their death-days, all are witnesses, not only of decent respect, but also of the fact that death, the common, natural, and inevitable end of human existence, is a challenge. He is happy who is ready and fearless to meet it.

There is no doubt that death colors and shadows life as no other event colors and shadows it. Natural human associations beget friendships and enmities, loves and hates, associations and obligations of many

kinds, which, quite irrespective of the following shadow, generate their own philosophies and codes of morals. So true is this that he who lives calculatingly with regard to what may happen to him when dead, is never quite completely respected. The prospect of post-mortem rewards and punishments may be drawn upon to encourage or frighten the negligent and immoral, but even the morality which is irrespective of death is never wholly willing so to stress the consequences of human acts as to rob them wholly of a justification other than their utility, or judge men wholly as calculators. There are always acts which should be done for their own sake. There is always an absolute lurking somewhere. The most industrious relativist cannot escape it, for he must have at last some way of life which makes consequences important even if no life is important without them. Death, however, puts a question mark to everything. It is true that it is not the reason for being honest instead of dishonest, kind instead of unkind, truthful instead of untruthful, helpful instead of harmful, just instead of unjust, friendly instead of unfriendly, a peacemaker instead of a warmaker. These distinctions of virtue may be left to stand on their own bottom. Death is, however, the inevitable consequence of our human existence wholly irrespective of our character. To die is something we have to do sooner or later and when

we reflect on the doing of it and weigh the consequences, what shall we put in the two pans of the balance? Into the one everything, into the other nothing? There may be happy or dull natures to whom such reflection does not occur. There may be those who have put it by. It has, however, so colored and shadowed the whole of our human existence that we speak of that existence as mortal. The end of life as Nature has defined it, is not the end at which life aims, yet life takes on death's adjective. Every now and then life stops to acknowledge it. Death cannot be kept wholly out from philosophy.

When we ask about a man, 'How did he die?' we may be asking only about the cause of his death, whether he died by violence — his own or others' — or by disease or accident or of old age. Death like any other natural event prompts us to look for its causes in order to gratify an intellectual curiosity and also, if possible, to control or discipline the causes themselves. Our curiosity is likely to be satisfied, for the causes of death seem always to be of the ascertainable kind, some break or stoppage in the body's activity brought about by wounds, lesions, poisons, alien growths, or the progressive exhaustion of the body's powers. In sum, the causes of death are bodily and natural, and concern the workings of that machine by which we keep going. They are no more magical or mysterious than other

natural causes, since it is as strange that arsenic should lend a greenish hue to paper that contains it, as that it should kill a man who takes it. We may turn Nature as a whole into a mystery, accounting it strange and past finding out why such familiar things as fire and water should have opposite effects or why within a common world living things and dead should exist side by side, but with the reign of cause and natural law that mystery seems to have nothing to do. So we are wont to say that things and events are mysterious only when we are ignorant of their causes or persist in not recognizing them. The recognition of them removes the mystery, to be dealt with by itself and in other terms. Given the causes, the effect must follow. Not to know why this is so is irrelevant to the fact that it is so. So death as a natural event is not mysterious. And, being a natural event, it is easy to see why it is no respecter of persons, but visits all alike at its own time. We may call a murder shameful, but there is no shame in Nature, in that set of contrivances by which a man may die at any time and must die eventually. As a natural event, death has no moral quality at all. Its quality is of the body, not of the soul, not of that set of considerations of which shame is one.

We may push this matter further. If Nature shows no moral quality in letting men die — let us speak this way, although we should be cautioned when saying

that Nature lets or hinders — she shows no moral quality in letting them live. She may be used for a purpose, but uses herself, so to speak, for none. She simply does what the occasion calls for, letting her rain fall on just and unjust alike. So we seem forced to conclude that the natural causes of our existence are equally free from praise and blame, even if we do not always hold them so. Perhaps we should regard these sources of our being with a suitable reverence. They furnish us the means of livelihood and of art. By understanding their efficacies we can improve the conditions of our living, enhance them, cure human ills, and make the desert blossom. Nature's own evident indifference to our welfare should not obscure the fact that it is disregard or ignorance of what she is that is responsible for much of human woe. This is so true that one might reasonably claim that our first duty is to believe earthly things. There are lessons to be learned from Nature even if she does not teach. She may be said to deserve reverence and piety. Indeed, the spectacle of her when we frame it without prejudice in the imagination, is grand and awe-inspiring. It is something, however, quite different from reverence and piety to praise or blame her, give or withhold her sacrifices as if she were a god. The evidence that she asks for such recognition or responds to it, is not good. Science frowns upon it as leading to nothing but bewilderment

and superstition. Yet science strangely at times — or some of the professors of it — lets Nature or natural causes acquit us of responsibility for what we do, apparently not suspecting that this is equally a superstition. It makes Nature moral and puts the responsibility for a better world upon her shoulders.

Natural causes, being free from praise and blame, are also free from responsibility. It will not do to appeal to them when moral distinctions are involved, such as better and worse, just and unjust. It certainly will not do. To justify or excuse an act is something so different from finding the causes of an event, that it is futile to substitute the operations of nature for the moral judgments of men. A man may excuse the murder he has committed by pleading that he lost his head. It is done. There may not be the slightest doubt that he is telling the truth; and truth may excuse him of the guilt of murder. Losing his head may explain the killing, but does it explain the excuse? That is the crucial question in the matter we are now upon. It is a searching question. It does not ask us to explain men's deeds in terms of natural causes. It asks us rather to observe that men bring their deeds into court, pass judgment upon them, try to decide which are good and which bad, which better and which worse, which just and which unjust — which may be excused. Natural causes know no moral categories. Who, then, will

explain in their terms the fact that moral judgment is passed upon their operation? It is a poor moral philosophy which finds the pith of morality in what we call the mores of men, their habits, codes, virtues, and vices, for the pith lies not in what men approve or disapprove, but in the fact of their approving or disapproving anything at all. Failure to recognize this seems strange. Perhaps it is to be accounted for by the effect which the discovery of relativity in what is considered moral often has upon the mind. It readily bewilders one, throws doubt upon his moral judgments and those of others, and leads him to the conviction that no stable distinction between right and wrong governs human acts. If, however, he would attentively follow his own procedure when he finds himself perplexed about what he should do, he would discover in the need of coming to a decision where neither right nor wrong are clearly determined for him by the application of accepted rules, the nature of morality wherever morals are found. Its law may be any variant of the golden rule applied under any circumstances without freeing men from their decisions. Natural causes do not explain this unless we turn this itself into a natural cause — a procedure yet to be examined. To explain it men flee to the soul or to considerations which lead them to picture in their imaginations a world more to be desired than the world in

which natural causes have produced them. Although natural causes bring us into being without any respect for character, some respect for character marks our dealing with them.

Although Nature is not moral and yet is marked, in the course of her operations, by moral beings coming into existence, their coming into being may be regarded as a natural event fully as much as any other generation. Yet we should observe the effect produced on Nature herself by this appearance in her history of creatures who accuse and excuse. They employ her as the material and means of their own purposes. She is their master when they talk of causes, their servant when they work for ends. When they consider the master, they find good reasons to conclude that she cares for them not at all, that their tenure in her domain is fickle, had once a beginning and will, in spite of their generative fertility, have an end. She herself, in so far as she is alive, is mortal and dying. Only the lifeless part of her is free from generation and decay and lasts forever. So when they consider the master, they are driven progressively into materialism and can have no philosophy except the philosophy of a dead world to which life is a wholly irrelevant incident and in which it is little different from a harmony which ceases while its instruments remain, utterly without significance except when enjoyed. When, however,

these same creatures consider the servant, they grow wings. They imitate the birds with a mechanism and borrow from flying a metaphor for the imagination. Their egotism is boundless. They reduce the servant to its slave. They act as if they were going to live forever, and so sorry are they when they find that they are not, that they invent another life in which to keep on going. They are souls, spirits, beings with divinity in them. No other words seem so apt at describing them, for they are in their aspirations the very antithesis of the body with its linkage with a dead world. Gods are what they would be were they free from the limitations and futilities which Nature, in spite of being their servant, fastens upon them. They seem destined for a deathless career, although it is certain that they will die. When they consider the servant, their philosophy is anything but materialistic. It is social, political, moral, poetic, religious. It has always to do with a better world, a world in which life is more abundant and satisfactory, a world of souls. Only in the interest of such a world is the body worth caring for; and in the interest of such a world bodies sweat and toil and are wounded and killed.

The distinction between soul and body was never the invention of philosophers to solve a problem, although it has given them a problem very hard to solve. It is not the product of reflection or education.

It springs spontaneously into being with the consciousness a man has that his body, although his most intimate possession, is, along with other things, an instrument of his desires. He uses the body to get what he wants and so makes it the servant of a master. This master, the ruling principle in him, is the soul. So insistent and inevitable is the distinction that it has always been far easier to convince most men that their bodies are worthless or illusions than that their souls are either; and most philosophers, too, it must be added. These subtle gentlemen are generally at one in claiming that bodies are known only as they are experienced and that out of this experience grows whatever subsequent status bodies are claimed to have. Their difficulties — and these are great indeed — in so fixing the crucial distinction that it is free from ambiguity, do little to deter them from making it anew and enforcing its implications to the best of their ability. And practice generally acknowledges the soul's superiority. It seems that this acknowledgment would be given no matter how the speculative question might be decided, for practice in its exercise makes Nature and natural causes — the body's world — significant only as the material and means of ends to be attained. The soul, whatever else it may be, is at least individuality in a world of choices, preferences, approvals and disapprovals, rewards and punishments, right and

wrong, just and unjust, and, above all, a world where there is the assumption of master, leadership, and control. This is not the body's world. As was said, no philosopher ever invented the distinction. It persists no matter what philosophy has to say. Death emphasizes it. The body, turned to dust, seems still to leave the soul's world what it was, something alien to Nature's claim upon the body.

The mastery of the body by the soul is clearly not for the body's sake. It is for the soul's, to make its immediate instrument as pleasing and effective as possible. The search for natural causes and the manipulation of them are rarely for the sake of the entertainment of seeing them perform in wonted or unaccustomed ways. There is such entertainment and it can be of a very high order. It is sometimes professed and exalted — truth for truth's sake alone. And it must be confessed that a true rendering of Nature and man's place in it would be a great achievement for the soul, irrespective of the practical consequences which might follow upon it. Indeed, a philosopher may claim that his sole business is to see and tell the truth without trying to influence the conduct of others beyond urging them also to see and tell it. If the truth could be seen without the desire to make it effective in industry, society, politics, morals, art, and religion, what effectiveness, if any, would it have? It is not difficult, per-

haps, to guess the answer even in the absence of so exalted a vision, for partial truth attained and held in that remoteness from practical human affairs, has unmistakable effects upon the soul, begetting in it attitudes of various kinds — hope, despair, sympathy, compassion, contempt, disgust, irony, love, laughter and tears. The soul would then be like a god looking at a world, taking no part in it, not wishing or wanting it different — but if that god were a soul, it is difficult to imagine that his contemplation of that body would not awaken in him an attitude which defined his character. God is supposed to have the unrefracted vision, and in proportion as he is supposed to have it, men have found it difficult to believe that he is wholly indifferent to what he sees. His attitude becomes a reflection of their own. So it has always been quite impossible for men to see truth — or confidently believe that they have seen it — and then return to practice with an attitude uncolored by what they have seen. After the vision, no matter what it was, they live remembering it or willingly die. If truth were to shine through the eyes, what would the effect of it be? Surely this, it would seem — the soul's complete intellectual mastery of existence. If it continued to inhabit a body and look out through mortal eyes, it would see in the fragments of the passing show reminders of the complete vision. It would live remembering.

Perhaps living is like that anyway — the pinning together of the fragments of a whole which, once found, the soul will recognize as the thing it sought. There is, doubtless, grave danger in seriously turning invention and discovery into recollection and memory, making the soul, in recognizing the truth it finds, cognize again what it knew once before, but had temporarily forgotten, like a man remembering a forgotten name. A poet may play with the fancy — 'not in entire forgetfulness' do we come — but philosophers should be cautious of accepting it. Let them also be cautious of setting it aside without consideration. They find many puzzling circumstances when they try to fathom this matter of finding out the truth of things. Among these, perhaps not the least, is their lack of agreement and their rivalry. What is truth? They define it and expect their definitions to be accepted, yet are told by others that the definitions are not true. What, then, would be a true definition? In the effort to answer that question we — for we may here all wish to be philosophers — run perilously near to the doctrine that we already know the answer and would recognize it if put in the proper words. All truth is derived from experience: and so is all error. Who or what decides between them? There is no truth, but only truths; but truths at one time are errors at another. Truth is that which satisfies a situation which is in doubt; but in doubt of what,

and what but truth will satisfy a doubtful situation? Truth is the agreement of thought with things: but how find that agreement out? Truth is consistency: but what is the measure of consistence besides 'can-and-can-not-be-true'? We might pursue the matter in more elaborate fashion. If we did, the suspicion might only grow that all our efforts are the effort to bring the soul to recognize the definition that is true. We are at least asking it to be mindful of what it is about. To be so mindful it must remember much and certainly so much of its past experience as it can.

Remembering one's past experience is, moreover, an arduous matter. It is often pleasant for wise old men to write their own biographies, but he must be a wise old man, indeed, who writes the biography of the soul, remembers what has happened to it in his own experience, and through observation and experiment draws upon the experience of others. We may set out light-heartedly. We define the circumstances, environment, and conditions under which a soul arises in its bodily habitat and then proceed to show how through interaction and interplay between his body and its surrounding world — the nature of the two conspiring through the senses and consciousness, or joining in conditioned reflexes or patterns of behavior — the soul comes to discover the world in which all this happens. The merits of such biographies need not be called in

question here. Yet here — with death the theme — it is not irrelevant to insist that the whole elaborate story implies the soul's competence to discover its own genesis. We may allow the competence fully and whole-heartedly, but the question may be asked — Whence came that confidence; what was its origin? If the question is not set aside as one we ought not to ask, our answer cannot be readily that genetic account which was so light-heartedly given. Steadily to face the fact that we are competent — or assume the competence — to write the history of that world into which we are born and out of which we die, is to face something astounding. That world has become the soul's object of knowledge and it must know that world thoroughly before it can give an adequate account of its own genesis; and yet its residence in that world is temporary. During its temporary residence it would discover the source from which it came. Is it so very strange that now and then we change 'discover' into 'recover' or say that souls are born into the world to find out what they are? What is finding one's place; developing one's powers to the full; having a fate, a destiny, a career; being a soul, a person? The questions may be unanswerable. If an answer is attempted, is it possible to disregard that competence which the soul claims as its own? Whether an answer is attempted or not, is it at all strange that human speech

so generally makes the body a temporary dwelling place of the soul? Is it strange that it should insist that while dwelling there, the soul has a business which is not temporary in character? Perhaps we ought rather to ask, Is it strange that while dwelling there, the soul should think itself immortal?

Of proofs of immortality there are many, but none of them seems rationally convincing. The proofs turn out, upon a critical examination of them, to be either illustrations of a conviction held without proof or defenses of it to assure assurance. The basal fact is the incommensurability of soul and body, an incommensurability which persists as long as the body lives and would obviously persist, therefore, if the body never died. Few men ever really want to die and then only on occasion, as it were, and hesitantly. Those who make away with themselves, do it with speed and dispatch or by a method which will bring death upon them unawares. And no one would be contented just to live in this world forever unless it were unimaginably different from what it is. Everybody, even those who practice escape from the world, is engaged while he lives in trying to make it, or some part of it, a more satisfactory place for himself. Even a monastery in which to retire or a pillar on which to sit is an attempt at more satisfactory conditions. This world would have to be made over very radically if the soul is to be

content with it forever. So immortality implies, not simply the absence of death, but the absence of death from the kind of world which suits the soul. It implies a world in which souls will have their deserts eternally. The existence of such a world is obviously difficult to prove. It is not a geographical matter. The best map of existence we can draw contains no indication of its location. There is no physical means of getting there unless that means be death. After death the body remains and the soul vanishes. Should the body revive or be revived, that, no more than Lazarus, would be proof of immortality. Nor would it be proof if the vanished soul should reappear in physical form to be seen, touched, and handled. More is needed. The body, too, must vanish and leave an empty grave behind. Proofs of immortality are, therefore, confessions of a faith or defenses of it. They illustrate the radical difference between body and soul and turn the illustrations into evidence. The more we employ the kind of evidence which, in other cases, our reason looks upon as sound and conclusive, the less likely does it seem that the soul is immortal. This ought not to be surprising. The thing that is surprising is that, face to face with death, such evidence never seems to be wholly good.

The other world, if there is one, from which the soul comes and to which it returns, is then a different world

from this. What we are told and tell ourselves about it, is in a language of familiar terms. There are mansions there, and gardens, rivers, mountains, trees, flowers, meadows, orchards, groves, lakes, seas, walks, roads, forests, deserts, fires, winds, caves, dens, pits, swamps, marshes, birds, beasts, fishes, men, women, children, gods, and God: a heaven and an earth. There are chariots and horses; boats and pilots. There is weather. There are cities and kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers, sovereigns and subjects. There is industry and amusement, work and play. There are ornaments, jewels, precious stones, brilliant lights. There are shadowed and dark places. There is music, singing, dancing; crying, groaning, writhing. There is praise and cursing. There is loving and hating. There is reward and punishment. These are familiar terms, but how unfamiliar their meaning! The literal-minded may take it literally, but even they, when pressed, confess to some imagery. The world from which souls come and to which they return — all its imagery may be condensed into that 'from' and 'to,' that 'coming' and 'returning.' Before birth and after death have an intelligible meaning in terms of this present world, but what is before and after them which is not here? Time in that other world has not a calendar in which the events of this are dated. To come from there here or go from here there, is not a coming and going like birth

and death, which leave 'before' and 'after' in the same time in which birth and death themselves occur. With reference to that other world, this 'from and to' is not even a metaphor. It is a judgment passed on this. This world — so the judgment runs in effect — exists only to be entered and left, not however, in the fashion in which a body moves from one place into another and out again with its location of before and after determinable, but as qualities — like color, sound, and beauty — appear and disappear in what exhibits them without themselves moving from one place into another; or like light and darkness which succeed each other alternately and yet seem so unearthly — fit symbols of life and death. Such fleeting presences seem to be far more truly the essence of existence than that chain of continuing and substantial causes which binds it together. It is the coming and going of these presences which divide this world from the other, as the coming and going of colors divide light from darkness. Our descriptions of the other world are the work of the imagination, embodying and transporting these presences in an effort to make them substantial. All that underpinning of typography, scenery, and the rest is a tale we tell ourselves to give the sense of reality to something that cannot be described. The tale varies with those who tell it and is never quite believable however told. Yet all tell some tale of 'after

death,' even the wise. The danger run in doing it is worthy — ἄξιον κινδυνεῦσας.

Perhaps it were wiser and worthier to examine into the natural causes of death in the hope of disciplining and controlling them. It may be, however, that relative wisdom and worth in these matters is less important, when we reflect on death, than implications found in our ways of dealing with it. The physician is one of our greatest benefactors and we should see to it that our debt to him is paid. To fees or a thank-offering may well be added that search for causes on which the practice of his art depends for its success. Science and medicine go hand in hand for the relief of pain, the curing of disease, and the prolongation of life. Surely better and healthier bodies are to be desired, especially since we find that having them is some discipline of the causes of that madness in men which works such woe among them. Unsound bodies so often go with unsound and feeble or vicious minds, that the knowledge of this, if it did not express itself in remedial practices, would be an affront to our intelligence. Life's prolongation and the lessening of mortality, joined as they are with the lessening of disease and pain and the improving of the conditions under which we hope and labor, are surely goods. A philosophy which would even hint that such things were better left undone lest we destroy that discipline of pain

which so often generates courage, endurance, and sympathy, would itself be cruel and merciless. The risk we run in reducing the hazards of life is worthy. It also merits reflection. Indeed, the whole of that deliberate use of natural causes, which follows so readily upon our ascertainment of them, can provoke an examination of its effects upon our attitude when we remedy the defects of Nature by our art, finding her careless and ourselves careful. Without us, things are badly managed. Disbelief in Nature's providence is matched by belief in our own. Knowing that we can, we assume the right to play providence to others, to train and educate them, choose for them, frame conditions for their living, and shape the course of their lives. It is a godlike assumption, this assumption of governorship and dominion. It takes a lot of wisdom to rule one's own life: how much more to rule that of others! It takes supreme wisdom when the question is of life or death. Too nervous a contemplation of our assumptions would reduce us to impotence, so many put it aside or refuse to contemplate it at all. They are practically wise, but it is questionable whether they are wholly so. Life is not wholly a practical matter. It suffers less from vision and wonder present than with them absent. It is well to examine what this use of Nature for our own ends implies.

It implies, of course, that we know how and for what

ends to use Nature, not fully, perhaps, but at least progressively, learning guidance from success and failure. It implies also that when we deliberately control the forces of Nature and do not simply follow the lead of our instincts and impulses without reflection, we determine the results that follow. Nature is then determined by our choices. Responsibility is laid at our door, for our fellows hold us then accountable and we so hold ourselves. Such deeds are ours and we are praised or blamed as the authors of them. It is in making such choices — whether deliberately to do this or that — that our perplexities arise. In little decisions we may have little trouble, but in great ones we would make the one that we can justify or that will justify us by its results. 'Tis thus we look for guidance. But, in the end, our knowledge of natural causes and our power to control them seem impotent to give it to us. They can, it is true, tell us what will happen if we do this or that, foretell the consequences to be expected, and help us to foresee how we shall be judged for what we have done. More, it seems, they cannot do. If this, then that, they say always, but whether this or that, never. Natural causes, as has already been said, are not moral, they neither praise nor blame, they do not choose the ends they bring about, they only bring them about. They seem to say to man, 'It is yours, not ours, to choose; understand us, and we will do within our power whatever you want done.'

In the face of this, controlling Nature is no light-hearted matter. Of course, we would control her for the better. So we say impatiently when some persistent questioner keeps nagging at us:

What, then, is better?

Why, pleasure is better than pain, happiness than misery, wealth than poverty, beauty than ugliness, justice than injustice, knowledge than ignorance, wisdom than folly, good than evil.

Assuredly; but who told you they were better?

Nobody; we do not need to be told, they tell us themselves.

Then why do you not listen to them more attentively; why are you so often the worse instead of the better?

Because we are not always certain of what is better; we make mistakes.

How can that be if the better and the worse tell you what they are? You must be very stupid to choose the worse telling you that it is the worse instead of the better telling you that it is better.

They don't always tell us; sometimes we have to tell ourselves.

But how do you do that; how do you tell yourselves that the better is the worse and the worse the better?

By trying them out.

I don't understand you: do you mean that by trying

out the worse you tell yourselves that it is the better, and contrariwise?

Of course we don't mean that; we mean that we try out something about which we are uncertain, whether it is better or worse, and then we find out which it is.

But I must ask again, how do you do that; if you were uncertain before, how do you become certain after?

The result tells us.

And it, I suppose, is better or worse?

Yes.

Then it is, after all, the better and the worse that tell you what they are, and yet you do not always choose the better. You are strange creatures. It seems to me that you are guided only by your fickle opinions as to what is better and what worse, but know nothing at all about the matter. I do not profess to know either. Like everybody else I know the obvious truth that the better is better than the worse, but what is better and what worse I suspect that God alone knows.

We might pursue the mimic dialogue further. Whether it is regarded as silly or profound will depend largely on how one regards the power of adversity to produce more saints than the power of prosperity, or compare the discipline of difficulty with the discipline of ease. The Litany — a very human supplication, no matter what its theology — after praying the good

Lord to deliver us *from* the major evils that beset us and by the mystery of his appearance among us, ends these supplications for deliverance with an *in:* 'In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.' It then begs that it may please him to take care of us. Our egotism is apt to be humbled when made conscious of what it is. It is humbled most when it ventures to control the causes of death. Suppose it had complete control of them and could abolish death at will. What then? Freed from the necessity of dying what would we let live? Into what hands are we willing to put the responsibility for the choice? Into what hands do we put it now, when we do not, in fear of the stability of our institutions, or in revenge, or in shame, selfishness, or despair, or in hope of its moral effect, deliberately take the life of others? There is but one answer to that question — in Nature's or in God's. Strange births, the weak, the imbecile, the insane, the criminal, the pain-racked, those suffering from diseases loathsome, fatal or dangerous to themselves and others, even children in the womb, we sedulously keep alive until the fatal event comes round in Nature's time. We forbid a man to kill himself and often punish him if he attempts it, insisting that even the condemned must be kept alive until the moment of their execution. We disapprove the reckless killing of animals, the waste of

plants, fruits, and flowers, and can implore the woodsman to spare the tree. Some of us go so far as to abstain from animal food. Others of us hope for the day when chemistry can so command the inorganic substances of earth that there will be no need of living by the death of other things. We would let the plague live if it did not harm and kill us. Death, normally, should be left in Nature's hands, not ours. So long as death is natural, we avoid responsibility for it when we can.

Would we take responsibility for it, were it unnatural? That is what our former question looks like in the light of what has just been said. Such a question is, perhaps, too speculative to merit much attention, for it is difficult to imagine a state of things in which death occurred only at our will, although such a state of things is implied by that knowledge which could put death wholly within our control. One thing is certain. We should have to be willing to put an end to many things and many kinds of people, in order to make this world much different from what it is. We should have to use death as an instrument of improvement. To provide immunity alone would not do. Suppose that our hearts were set on what we call noble things only, like justice, we should have progressively to invent and apply an elaborate system of eugenics which would gradually eliminate the growths we

found obnoxious. We should have to breed for deathlessness on earth. Granting success, new questions crowd upon us. The least of these would not be the question of population. It troubles us even now and recommends the practice of birth control. Such control in a deathless world would be laughable. There should be no babies there at all, no children, only old people growing older or, shall we say, only perpetual youth. Would perpetual youth be wise enough to keep a deathless world alive? All this looks very much like nonsense. Yet to this or similar nonsense we are driven by the Midas touch which transmutes all earthly things to gold. This world made deathless would itself be dead. There seems to be no doubt of it whatever. And even Holy Writ could not keep the Garden eastward in Eden beyond a chapter. The first man born by natural causes committed murder in order to have things more to his liking. The whole story is metaphysically sound or it would never have made so many people believe it is historical. The responsibility for death left as far as possible in Nature's hands is the only hope of gaining — or regaining — paradise.

We may resume the mimic dialogue, only now it should turn into a soliloquy.

Since I do not have the knowledge of the better and the worse, I spend my life in seeking and inquiring. I have tried to hurt nobody, unless it is hurting them to

probe into their minds to bring to birth the thoughts that lie hidden there. I have sought out the young and beautiful because their youth and beauty always stirred me with a sense of something trying to express itself in them and they seemed not averse to me when they found out that I was after something different from the usual lover. I have tried to serve my city and my friends, doing my duty when called upon and always trying to avoid anything that looked like injustice. Do you mock me here, throwing my former words in my teeth, and ask me how I know what looks like injustice? I will give you a strange answer: because the soul is deathless. It is difficult for me to explain this, even to myself, although I am quite sure of it. When I try, I find myself arguing or telling fables of a wonderful land and doings beyond the stars which nobody is apt to believe as I hardly believe them myself. But one day I read a book by a man who said in the beginning of it that the whole world was arranged by intelligence. This surprised me because I had been taught quite differently at school. So I was curious about the man and the book and read on. To my surprise he dropped intelligence very quickly and went on to explain everything in terms of natural causes and motions just like ordinary natural philosophers. But he had shaken my faith in these men. I saw quite clearly that they never explained what I myself was in the

habit of doing, as I went about among my fellows, seeking. I had to believe the first part of the man's book, because it made me see that I was seeking for the very thing that he said had arranged all things. It seemed to me to be the best thing possible for everybody, even when they did the most opposite and contrary things, kept appealing to it and saying it was the best of things because without it there was no distinction of the better and the worse, but everything was just as it is. That was what the natural philosophers were always saying, that everything is just as it is, and that seemed to me to explain nothing at all. They said that the earth was round because they had found it to be round, forgetting, as I thought, that they would have said that it was some other shape if they had found it to be that shape. Simply finding out that things are as they are doesn't explain them at all. If they tried to show me that the world was round because it is best for it to be round, I would listen to them, for I am haunted by that book and what men say — that intelligence disposes things for the best. So I have come to believe that the whole of Nature and indeed everything that happens is a disposition for the best. When I live by this faith I am at peace with myself, but when I do not, something warns me that I am on the wrong track. I have some friends who love me and think that I do good to those who have the work of the world to

do. Most people think that I am useless, shiftless, and a dreamer, standing as I do sometimes agaze at the sky and careless whether I live or die and about most of the things for which men usually care. Some people seem to be afraid of me, so they have convinced the city that I corrupt the young and preach strange and impious doctrines. I have not been able to defend myself. So I have been condemned to die by my own hand. My friends have tried to persuade me to escape, telling me that it is often done and that they can fix things all right. If I should turn to follow their advice, I know I should get the warning. They have not persuaded me because I believe that even my death in this way is for the best. Indeed, as I review my own life and reflect on the lives of others, we all seem to be busy with dying. At least we give up certain things that we may have other things and profess that we do this for the best, especially when we give up the things of the body for the things of the soul. And we all say that the things of the body are a great hindrance to the things of the soul. Is giving up the things of the body, then, such a very different thing from dying, which is only giving up the body altogether? Should a man be afraid to do this lest he give up his soul too? I tell you, no. He will have to give up his body sometime. I will not say, the sooner the better, for that is to interfere with the disposition of things and no man

should choose his own time to die, for that is not the best time. I may say that I am now choosing to die instead of to live because I have rejected my friends' plan to escape, but clearly I have not chosen the time of my death. That has been chosen for me and so clearly that if I ran away I would have no soul left to live for. So I could lose my soul as readily by living as by dying. That is one reason, a strange one perhaps, why I say that the soul is deathless — because it can be lost whether we live or die. At any rate there are times when a man ought to be more afraid of living than of dying. So I cannot see how a man should be afraid to die lest he lose his soul, unless having lost it already he thinks that by living longer he can get it back. But if he still has his soul he is not only not afraid to die, but is ready to when his time comes. So I am ready and fearless. I am quite sure that after I am dead no evil can happen to me. Those fables I tell myself and which I only half believe, tell me quite the contrary. I must go at sunset. Before I go I will tell one of my friends to see that the doctor is paid.

All that has been here said about death — the substance of it at least — can be found in Plato's dialogues, either explicitly or by implication. The theme, or hints of it, is rarely absent from their pages, being dominant every now and then and finding its completest develop-

ment in the 'Phædo.' There Plato so deals with the death of Socrates that if this dialogue is read first, it shadows the others, making of Socrates the man who died fully as much as the man who talked. If it is read last, it seems to lend perspective to the others, giving them less the aspect of a system of philosophy than the record of a man who sought for something which ended in a cup of hemlock. Even those dialogues which seem doubtfully Plato's and are lacking in that human sympathy touched with irony so characteristic of him, catch the coloring and tempt one to believe that they too belong to a concerted whole. Philosophy with Plato, then, seems what the 'Phædo' says it is, a meditation on death. We seem asked to see, not the world properly analyzed, put together, and explained — something difficult to find in Plato with the best of will — not a programme for social, educational, and political reform — something often found there — but to see all these things as a dying man might see them; not gloomily, however, except as we cannot help crying when a dear friend dies, but with sympathy, kindliness, humor, some laughter and irony, conscious that comedy and tragedy go hand in hand, that there is a day's work to be done after a night of revel, and that death, if not the best proof in the world that all is for the best, is the supreme instance of the division between deathless and dying things, between what is

good and not good to be ever cherished, imagined, remembered. The good are unlike the gods who know everything and never die, and unlike the stupid who know nothing and never live. They are something in between, living and dying, a little mad when they glimpse beauty and a little sane when they glimpse truth, not wisdom's possessors, but wisdom's lovers. Plato, as the legend has it, was the offspring, not of a goddess and a man, but of a god and a woman, Apollo's, not Minerva's, son.

The 'Phædo' has often been construed as a dissertation by Plato on the immortality of the soul. In it Socrates claims that the soul does not die and supports the claim by an argument with himself and his friends. One finds 'proofs' which have been repeated many times since: that living is a kind of dying, the surrender of bodily interests for the interests of the soul; that life is followed by death and death by life, 'that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die'; that soul and body are incomparable; that the soul remains the same soul throughout life while the body is constantly changing and renewed; that the soul is not the function or harmony of the body and so ceases when the body dies, because the soul controls the body while no harmony controls its instruments; that the soul is simple and, unlike the body, uncompounded and only compounded things can lose their identity;

that men would not think so much of a future life, or poets, wise men, and saints try to tell what it is like, if there were no truth in it. It is doubtful whether such proofs ever convinced any one unless he already believed or wanted to believe or feared to. Their validity or invalidity is not really the impressive thing about them. The impressive thing is that in our attempts to estimate death we always seem to be driven back on life. This is not a convincing proof of the immortality of the soul, but it is difficult indeed not to find in it convincing proof that human life is not intelligible or interpretable in terms of the physical instrument which supports it. Reflection only intensifies the contrast which humanity has expressed in the terms 'body' and 'soul' even if inquiry steadily discloses the dependence of the latter on the former. Juggle with language as we will, the contrast is never completely covered up. The soul is completely 'natural' only when 'nature' confesses the 'supernatural.'

There is another impressive thing about the argument in the 'Phædo.' When we ask what remains after death, the expected answer is not, a body to be buried. Socrates before attempting to prove that the soul exists after death would prove that it existed before birth. This makes of the question, 'What remains?' something different from the search for a vanished soul. It alters it to a question of the things to which birth and death

seem to be irrelevant, the things which could make up a world into which we would willingly be born and out of which we would willingly die, as often and as long as that world remained. These are those excellent things which, it seems, life might be and illustrate; timeless and deathless things, it would seem, because life is haunted by them and estimated from the manner in which it illustrates them. Existence in time and space seems like an illustration of something which *is* in a wholly different way. Life is like an interruption of the deathless so that one might almost say that it is rather by not being deathless that we live than by ceasing to live that we are dead. We can die only after having lived, so that 'having lived' and not the fact that life begins and ends, is what gives the intimation of immortality.

The 'Phædo' puts this into the mouth of a man about to die. We are not bidden to listen to a lecture by a professor of philosophy who at the end of the hour will go about as usual; we are bidden to listen to a man who knows that when the day's sun has set, all earthly ties will have been severed. There is a difference here which can hardly be set down as a trick of art to conceal or heighten instruction. It makes a reader suspect that the subject of the 'Phædo' is not the immortality of the soul, but dying and that, if dying is to be truthfully portrayed, a man must die. It is the most dramatic

thing we do. There is a vast difference between getting together to talk about it and coming together to behold it. Plato makes us see it, and see it under circumstances which so heighten it, that the death of Socrates has become one of the great deaths of the world. The 'Phædo' answers the questions which Echecrates asks at the beginning: 'What did the man say before his death; and how did he die?'

The man is to die at sunset, in obedience to the law of the city he loved, by drinking poison from a cup held in his own hands, and in the company of his dearest friends. All the common causes of death are absent and so it loses nothing of its quality through emphasis on theirs. We are not at a bedside where the coming of death would bring relief from present or future suffering. We are in a prison, but a prison from which escape is barred only by the will of him who is to die. Death is to be self-inflicted without being suicide. Accident is not suddenly to snatch the man away, surprising him and his friends. There has been long waiting while a ship of ceremony, bearing offerings to a god, has gone and returned, delayed by reluctant winds. The reasons why the man has been condemned are not good. They have caused astonishment and dismay. The defense was adequate to the charge, but those responsible for the sentence had been so offended in their egotism and so desirous of giving an example of their power that the

sense of justice left them. The vote had been so close that one suspects that all would have been glad if the condemned man had escaped, leaving his accusers satisfied with their victory, but free from the fatal consequences of it. The man is old, but in the vigor of mind and body and at an age when the fruits of a good life may be harvested and enjoyed. His life has been such as to merit an unconscious falling into the last sleep. But his friends are about him and those ties are to be consciously severed which men hold most dear. All this is the sublimation of death. Nothing is allowed to lessen the shadow of its impending presence. Life is consciously and deliberately to end in the fullness of life, amid the ties and associations of the living, and for the sole reason that the man thinks it is right. Here death and death only is to be seen and accepted. What did he say and how did he die?

He talked of death and dying in terms of going away — he who has so often said, 'Let us be going' and 'To-morrow, God willing.' His friends found him with his wife and child saying good-bye. She, hysterical with grief at their coming, cried out the never again of to-morrow and to-morrow. She had to be taken away. The man, released from his chains and rubbing his freed legs, spoke of the oddity of pain and pleasure always in each other's company as if God had joined two contrary heads to one body — Æsop might have

made a fable of it. A friend seized on the subject as if to avoid the real one and asked about the man's turning Æsop's fables into verse — there was talk in the city about his writing poetry in prison. The man told of a dream he had had many times which bade him sing and how he thought he ought to obey it before he died. It was he who turned the talk to death, to going away. The friends restrained their grief, trying to be impersonal and argumentative, laughing even when some witticism dropped from the man's lips and then apologizing for it, unable at the time to keep the tears back or check the sorrowing words of regret when what was said made the presence of death come near. With each word the going away came nearer. That they might be convinced — because they wanted to be — the man spoke out of his own convictions on the matter of life and death. For a time they forgot where they were and debated with the zest of other days until the argument brought them to a stop, face to face with what they dreaded. The man mused; then a smile lit up his face. Stroking the head of a dear friend at his side and playing with his hair, he said, 'To-morrow' — and with a pleasantry changed it to 'To-day.' The argument went on and changed to stories of the other world which caught the imagination and pushed aside for a little while the coming shadow. But the sun's shadow had lengthened. The man rose to go into

another room, to bathe, he said, before drinking the poison, that others might not have the trouble of doing it after. The friends thought of other things to be done after, the care of his family, the way of his burial. He would have them remember their lives. He went into the other room alone, refusing aid. The friends waited. They tried to talk of the man's words only to find their own sorrow possessing them — the sense of losing a father and being left orphans in the world. The man returned and said good-bye once more to his family. It was now nearly sunset. A jailor entered to give warning of it and left with streaming eyes. The man bade him farewell with a word of praise. The sun was still upon the mountains and had not set. A friend advised delay. But why, the man asked. He took the cup from the hand of a boy. He poured a drop on the ground with a prayer, and drank. His friends could no longer hold back their grief. They broke down weeping. 'A man should die in peace; be quiet and be brave.' He walked about and then lay down as he had been told. Death slowly crept through the body. His last words were: 'We owe a cock to Æsculapius; do not forget to pay it.' The great cure had been wrought. They closed the silent mouth and the fixed eyes.

VII

SOCRATES

The recurrence of such perennially human themes as politics, education, love, and death, and a dramatic rather than a systematic treatment of them, constitute for the writer of this book the impressive thing in the dialogues of Plato. A theory in the sense of a vision of the world and not a theory in the sense of an explanation of it, is what is found; a programme for the guidance of the spectator of life's drama and not a programme for the actor in it. Seeing is exalted above both explaining and doing. Emphasis falls on this exaltation. To have that vision perfectly would be to be wholly wise and like the gods. To have it imperfectly, but as well as a man may, is to be partially so — a lover of wisdom, a philosopher. Detachment from life by one compelled to participate in it by his humanity, is the desired thing. And this detachment cannot be gained so long as men are busily engaged in running their cities, in educating their young, in loving

their favorites, in healing their sick, and burying their dead. They must be lured away now and then from these things, or stopped abruptly in their haste, and permit themselves to be subjected to an art which unmasks them. They must see themselves behaving, with the springs of their behavior discovered or suggested. They must see, however, with a consciousness of what they are doing. These interruptions in their activity must not be merely distracting incidents which may amuse or divert them or make them forget themselves by turning their attention to others. Reflection must be sustained. Life, as it flows by, must be impertinently questioned until the suspicion, at least, breaks upon the beholder that it is not men that think, but kinds of men, politicians, educators, lovers, and the dying. That egotism, so human yet like divinity within us, which elevates personal opinions to the worth and dignity of unbiased and impersonal truth, is to be exposed in dramatic illustrations of it and not in learned treatises which conceal it. Only the confession of ignorance dramatically wrung from the search for truth reveals what knowledge would be. Plato's dialogues present man in the concrete, the political, learning, loving, dying man, with a body which walks the earth, is born and dies, needs nourishment and shelter, craves indulgence, has friends and enemies; and with a soul which has the habit of caring for the body in a strange

way, restless, curious, questioning, never satisfied, and yet aspiring, looking up, that is, to the stars, those everlasting symbols of that which does not suffer change or decay or death.

Such a presentation does not deny a moral effect to the writings of Plato or a moral purpose to him in writing them. It may reveal or at least suggest both. The note of irony which Plato repeatedly strikes has no overtones which can comfortably warrant either extravagance or cynicism. The smile is gentle and wistful even if the method is so often relentless. Back of all is a genuine lover, a lover of cities, of men, and of ideas. He does not obtrude himself on the reader, but lets a strange man with an appropriate name go about, searching the beautiful words to charm the souls of those who would apply a leaf to the body to cure an aching head. It seems needless to search beyond the dialogues themselves for a motive actuating them, for there is one thing they do which is free from any shadow of doubt — they send Socrates among men to hold them up with questions and they do this professing that it is for men's good. This is what they keep on doing to-day so many centuries after Plato's death. With Socrates Plato has charmed mankind. No one — statesman, teacher, lover, mortal — can read the dialogues without meeting Socrates face to face and being forced to try to answer questions which probe what he

is doing. Purely antiquarian or historical interest must be set aside for those hours when documents — and not ourselves — are searched.

If the dialogues have thus confronted so many readers with the man who dies in the Phædo, it is natural to conclude that it was Plato's original purpose to confront Athens with Socrates whom the city had put to death. It is natural to conclude also that the continuing effect of the former indicates the intended effect of the latter.[1] Whether the same effect was produced by the living Socrates as he went about among his fellow citizens, is difficult to make out. When we attempt to reconstruct the period as a setting for the life and death of Socrates, we have to deal with documents which confuse and bewilder us. They are not free from bewilder-

[1] This cannot be said of all the dialogues. Some of them do not support the interpretation here given. When the dialogues as a whole, or nearly so, are taken as the literary output of one man, they present a very baffling problem in the intellectual development of their author. A distinction between a Socratic and non-Socratic period or between an early, middle, and late period is of long standing among scholars. Personally, I have been able to come to no confident opinion in these matters beyond this: the 'late' Plato is so different from the 'early' Plato that I cannot find in the former the maturing of the latter. The 'early' Plato seems to me to be both intellectually and artistically so superior to the 'late,' that I am forced to believe that the latter, if genuine, represents a decline rather than an advance in the man's powers. Further, I am forced to believe that it is the character given to the dialogues by the presence of Socrates in them that has been the real force which has given Plato his reputation. It is this conviction which has dominated the present study and explains — if it does not assure — my own bias. In the face of Platonic scholarship, it would be absurd to claim that I alone am free from bias, although I may impertinently insist that I have no monopoly of egotism. The swan dream quoted in the first chapter from the *Anonymous Life* is as good a comment as was ever made on Platonic scholarship and, perhaps, the best 'interpretation' of Plato after all.

ment themselves. Xenophon opens his 'Memorabilia' of Socrates with these words: 'I have often wondered by what possible arguments the accusers of Socrates persuaded the Athenians that he was worthy of death at the city's hands.' One reads the 'Apology' of Plato to wonder the more. The life and death of Socrates are reported to us in a manner that renders the situation astonishing and perplexing almost to the point of disbelief. Perhaps we have in this fact as good a clue for reconstruction as any other. The condemnation of Socrates to death was one of the unbelievable things that sometimes happen. Being unbelievable, it shook confidence. It became a challenge. Although the body of Socrates was dead and buried, out of the way, the man himself began to live anew, his former life transfigured to conform to the challenge of his death. Having left the city as he did, he could now be recognized as the inquisitor of Athens even if he had not been so recognized before. To acquit Socrates after he was dead was to convict the city while he was alive. What possibly could be said in its defense? Perhaps nothing at all. Yet the post-mortem defense of him may disclose something of what his city was like when it put him to death.

Plato's dialogues present both a dramatic rendering of the life of reason and also the picture of a state of mind. They are documents relevant to an existing

society in which current intellectual interests have been stimulated and motivated by new and revolutionary forces. Innovations abound, are looked for, expected. Foreigners, distinguished and undistinguished, have flocked to the city to make money, to make reputations, to pose. There is the sense of novelty, criticism, and reorganization, rather than the sense of steadiness and assured progress. There is intellectual acuteness without intellectual certainty. There is a high degree of enlightenment and sophistication, but little sense of security. And the upsetting of security seems to have begun recently and to be still in progress. We are not dependent on Plato for this impression of his time. The fifth and fourth centuries B.C. constitute one of the extraordinary periods of literary activity in the history of the western world. Taking as limiting dates the battle of Marathon in 490 and the death of Aristotle in 322, we find comprised within those hundred and sixty-eight years the greater part of those things which Poe called the glory that was Greece. And we are very far from having it all as our heritage. Here was an astonishing and at times reckless outburst of energy rushing to a multiple perfection. It was a period of achievement following achievement and not a period of consolidating gains — a restless and a brilliant time which dwarfed precedent times and made them look poor indeed. And it ended in devastating civil war. Greece

was ruined in its glory through internal jealousy and strife. In such a society there is often a reckless eagerness for entertainment, cultivation, and for being up-to-date. It has its groups of intellectuals, its sophists, who invade the metropolis with their propagandas and their ministry of improvement. Athens, in spite of her troubles, had for years been increasing in prosperity, splendor, and distinction. She had become the most notable center of culture. She was very conscious of the Periclean achievement. Under the influences of her beauty, her magnificence, her unmatched opportunities, one could be socially and intellectually polished off, could become polite and urbane. And to be polite and urbane had reached, in Plato's day, and before, a high degree of sophistication.

Such societies are marked by certain contrasts which tend to reach the level of estranging moral distinctions. There is the contrast between the rustic and the urbane, the vulgar and the refined; between the conventional and the unconventional; and, above all, between the doer and the reformer. This last contrast cuts deeper into the social body than any other. It creates a moral distinction which makes of reformers the superior class and of doers the inferior. There is something peculiarly irritating in being put into the class of those who need to be reformed, and often something meanly subservient in accepting that position voluntarily. There

is also something very egotistical in undertaking the reformation of others as a profession, especially when one thereby makes a living or becomes socially prominent and featured. Those who are being reformed and those who are doing the reforming are rarely bound together in the ordinary ties of human fellowship, sympathy, and esteem. People may actually wish to be improved in the sense of being helped to become better-off in their social, economic, or intellectual status where they may reap the fruits of a fuller life, but they do not like to be improved by a class of professional improvers who see in them, not fellow-human beings subject to the common exigencies of existence, but beings to be made over before they can have any respectable status at all. Those who are doing the work of the world do not like to be told how to do it by others who are not doing that work and have no responsibility for the consequences of doing it. And the reason is simple. Those who have not done that work do not know what it is and what it involves. They have a tendency to conceive it in terms of moral categories which are clear-cut, when it operates in terms of interests, adjustments, and compromise. A man who has worked hard to bring discordant and conflicting forces into harmony and coöperation, is annoyed when asked if he has really done right. Cephalus, in the 'Republic,' could meet the question, What is justice? with a smile.

Others might meet it with a cup of hemlock. When the question has reached a point where certain things must either be allowed to go on or be stopped, the answer is not a discussion or a definition; it is an act.

There are many indications that this is what the social and intellectual situation was like in Plato's day. But Athens had to be managed. The city's internal business and external relations had to be attended to by somebody. These matters at that time did not call for speculation, but for hard work. They required adroit management in the face of intriguing factions eager for power. Those in power at the time did not have their philosophies at stake; they had their political reputations, their fortunes, and their lives. Groups of intellectuals discussing moral questions, getting culture through philosophy and reforming education and government by discourse, were not welcome. Their influence was bad. They disturbed people's minds, introduced irrelevant and untimely issues, made young men averse to going into politics for fear of soiling their hands and squeamish about things that have to be done when you are dealing with actual life and not with abstract ideas. What is the sense of arguing about things that have to be done anyway? What is the sense of pulling things up by the roots to look at them when what is needed is immediate care of a struggling growth? These intellectuals claim that the city is in

bad hands, in the hands of people who do not know how to run a city, who are uncultivated, tanners, for example. But the people in whose hands the city happens to be are Athenians as much as anybody else. They know what they want and are not discussing it. They are going after it. They are tired of this everlasting fault-finding, especially by those who, secure in their leisure, do nothing else. It is time to put a stop to all this, to call a halt, to do something which will strike a little terror into the hearts of the irresponsible. Those in whose hands the city is may not be able to talk learnedly and with the superior air of the intellectuals, but they have power. So they put Socrates to death, a sacrifice to resentment and fear.

By what possible arguments could they have persuaded the Athenians that *he* deserved the penalty of death? It does not appear to have been a matter of argument, but a matter of choice. His death would serve as an example and his death would involve the least risk to themselves. He was, to begin with, an Athenian. They might have chosen one of the foreigners on whom rich Athenians were spending money and attention; but they already had enough foreign complications on their hands. Socrates was moreover a man of no party. He had a small following, to be sure, the friends of Socrates, but it was not clear that they followed him as a leader who united them in the

consciousness of a common cause to which they had devoted themselves. They were too heterogeneous. Socrates was less a leader, perhaps, than a curiosity which a group of intellectuals was exploiting for their own entertainment or in rivalry with others. He had made plenty of enemies through his insolence and habits. Even his friend Aristophanes had lampooned him. He was poor, without family or wealth to support him. But he was evidently an intellectual radical through and through, and perhaps of the most dangerous kind, for he had the reputation of upsetting opinions and putting nothing in their place. Although disliked by the more professional spreaders of propaganda, he was really of their class. Seizing upon him would not be like seizing upon one of them with the backing they would be likely to have. Yet seizing upon him would be a clear warning to others. Their turn might come next. They would be made afraid. To be sure the punishment of Socrates might lead them to consolidate their interests, unify their followings and present a more united front; but this was not altogether likely, for they were very jealous of one another and the rich people who supported them would probably be less inclined to do so when they saw what it might involve. At the worst, the execution of Socrates could do little harm. It might do a good deal of good. It would at least be an example, even if the example was not very effective.

Such resentment as might follow would soon blow over. The situation, however, would clearly be improved, for there would be a little more caution and circumspection after the warning. So they charged Socrates with being irreligious and a corrupter of the young — the standard charge against intellectuals in all ages.

Whether this imaginative picture of the situation is near or far from the truth, the consequences of the death of Socrates were in all probability not what his accusers expected. What they gained or lost by his death we do not know. A late story that they were put to death by the Athenians in repentance, is not believed. So far as can be made out, the execution of Socrates was wholly futile as a remedy for anything. Nothing was gained for the improvement of the city and nothing lost but a harmless old man and possibly a few reputations. The death of Socrates, however, did not pass unnoticed save as a political execution. It became a theme of popular interest. Defenses began to be written of the man, partly to exonerate him, partly to show the writer's skill. He rapidly became a proverb and a legend. His name became attached to a form of literary composition. Fiction and fact are so blended in what remains to us of the story that there is no sure separation of them. He became enshrined in logic as the typical instance of its neatest syllogism which proves the mortality of each of us from the

mutual humanity of all of us: even Socrates is mortal, being a man. What he would have been without Plato, is an idle question. How far Plato has given us a biography of him seems like an unanswerable one. But what Plato did with him remains for all to read; and it seems likely that as long as it is read the figure of Socrates in ancient Athens will be real and his death one of the great tragedies of history.

The question of the part Socrates played in real life is different from that of the part he played in the dialogues. Both questions may receive ultimately the same answer. Plato may have copied directly from life, but his genius seized upon a feature of that life which was peculiarly significant for his purpose. Socrates is as much a factor in the art of the dialogues as he ever was in the life of Athens. He is *the* personage in them. He often appears at once challenging somebody with a question or being challenged himself. When he is introduced late in a scene, it is his part which is prepared for and expected. What will Socrates say? How will he handle the matter in hand? So effectively is this managed that a too casual reader often overlooks what others say or regards it of little importance. And the victory always seems to belong to Socrates. He has the last word. Sometimes, as notably in the 'Protagoras' and the 'Republic,' he is both actor and narrator. Here again a reader may be

careless and not see that Socrates is giving an exhibition of himself. It is strange that commentators should ever have described him as a man with the habit of laconic speech, incapable of sustaining a long argument, getting lost in its intricacies, and preferring simple questions and answers. It is stranger still that they should use the 'Protagoras' to support this contention. He not only tells the whole story, but makes himself make next to the longest speech in it. He speaks long enough and intricately enough in many a dialogue to the confusion and bewilderment of one who follows his argument critically. The 'Socratic method' as exhibited in the dialogues is something quite different from the asking of questions which are to be answered by 'yes' or 'no.' It is a 'dialectical method' only because Socrates says it is and the reader does not question the saying. Or, it may be more exact to affirm, that 'dialectic' is a consequence of the Socratic method and not its manner. We are driven into dialectical situations and left there to flounder. In dialogues like the 'Statesman,' in which dialectic is the main thing, forcing us to choose between alternatives and then find new alternatives again, Socrates is dwarfed to insignificance as a character. We have only questions and answers with little to relieve the tedium of it except what is irrelevant or parenthetical. The outcome may be Socratic in its effect, however, such a spell is cast by

the man's name. Indeed, the dialogues — the most of them — *are* Socratic discourses. Without the presence in them of his particular personality so presented to us that we feel ourselves always in the presence of the same man, confronted with the same inquisitive spirit, obliged to breathe the same atmosphere of discussion, many a dialogue would lose its effectiveness and charm. If it were not Socrates to whom we are listening, listening would not be worth while. He makes us overlook trivialities and absurdities at which we should otherwise rebel. It seems impossible to overemphasize his importance. Take him away and in his place put here and there the names of philosophers with reputations and the Platonic 'system' would break into fragments and become a confused mass of ill-considered opinions. Plato, by his use of Socrates, has saved himself from oblivion and led many a student to search the dialogues for a hidden system of thought and things instead of seeing human thinking reflected by a man who confesses his ignorance, his failure as inquirer and teacher, his contempt of the world, the flesh, and the devil, his sympathy with those who seek what they can find only in the sky, being only a child of plenty and want, and who is put to death as a consequence.

If we resist the almost inevitable idealization of this strange man, he is seen to be a very human person. He is companionable. He mingles with all sorts and con-

ditions of men, free from their major faults, but certainly not free from their minor ones. He lends himself to equivocal situations which a more prudent man would avoid. He tries to see as much of life as possible without going too far. He is no paragon of perfection. His egotism is pronounced and makes him very careful of the things that will keep him in character and very careless of everything else. He plays up to what is expected of him. In the arguments into which he draws others he is not fair as a disputant. Of the tricks of logic and the devices of rhetoric he is a master and trusts more to them than to coherent reasoning. Flattery, cajolery, insinuation, innuendo, sarcasm, feigned humility, personal idiosyncrasies, brow-beating, insolence, anger, changing the subject when in difficulty, distracting attention, faulty analogies, the torturing of words, making adjectives do the work of nouns and nouns of adjectives, tacking on verbs to qualities which could never use them, glad of an interruption or a previous engagement, telling stories which make one forget what the subject of discussion was, hinting that he could say much more and would if his hearers were up to it, promising more to-morrow if they are really interested and want to go on — an accomplished sophist if there ever was one.

The argumentation of Socrates can claim little, if any, superiority to human argumentation generally.

It is not the arguments which give him significance, but he who gives them significance. Plato has made him the incarnation of all the subtleties men use in argument to confirm or destroy opinions. But Socrates, unlike others, does use them for the same purpose. He argues not in defense of opinions, but to reveal what they are. He professes to envy the position of teachers and their possession of knowledge which they can impart, but he confesses that he has not taught anybody anything and cannot do so. And as we read the dialogues, we find they support his confession. We do not leave Socrates instructed in the subjects there discussed. He upsets the confident opinion of others without putting another confident opinion — least of all his own — in its place. Inconclusiveness and not conclusiveness is the constant outcome of the discussion. This is so common and often so unexpected — we seem at times so near the truth that it ought to be reached — that it ought to be taken as deliberate. And the effect of it is, as has been said already, to reveal men to themselves, to make them see what their opinions are like, to make self-knowledge more important than any other kind of knowledge. This could not be effected if Socrates' knowledge was made or substituted for our own. We cannot, when pushed to the last defense, make another's defense our own. If Socrates is to reveal us to ourselves and our knowledge to be what it is, he him-

self must know nothing. Did he profess to have knowledge as others profess to have it, his answers to their questions would be like their answers to his. It is because he knows nothing and so has no bias of his own, that bias in others is revealed and thinkers shown to be mortal and lovers and teachers and politicians. He is a mirror which reflects the thinking man. The mirror must reflect without refraction.

The story told of Socrates that he went about Athens trying to disprove — or at least to understand — the god-uttered reply which his impetuous friend Chærephon brought back from Delphi, that no one was wiser than Socrates, may be a true story; and he may have reached the conclusion which Plato puts in his mouth: 'He is wisest among you, who, like Socrates, knows that, in wisdom, he really amounts to nothing.' Plato makes us believe it because he makes its truth so essentially the character of his Socrates that the dialogues illustrate it again and again. In the face of human perplexity, in the conflict between soul and body, in making constitutions for cities, in teaching the young or old, in loving and being loved, and, above all, in dying, he is the wisest of men who is conscious that he has no wisdom at all. The less wise give men their cities, their schools, their loves, and their end, neatly set forth in systems of government, in textbooks of instruction, in psychologies of emotion, and in

natural histories — books which illustrate the story of Theuth's invention for the Egyptians, books which are dead: but life asks its questions in terms of living and wants a living answer. And the wisest man could not be the wisest, unless he died accepting death as he had accepted his city, his instruction, and his loves.

THE END

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